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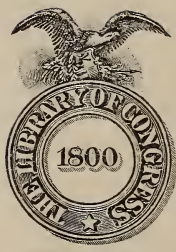

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MARRIED AND SINGLE.

A Comedy.

IN THREE ACTS.

FIRST PERFORMED AT

THE THEATRE-ROYAL, HAYMARKET,

On Friday, July 16th, 1824.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

AN EXPOSURE OF A RECENT

LITTLE PROCEEDING OF THE GREAT DIRECTOR

OF

The Theatre Royal, at the Corner of Brydges Street.

BY JOHN POOLE, ESQ.,

AUTHOR OF "SIMPSON AND CO." "WHO'S WHO?"

&c. &c.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR JOHN MILLER, 5, NEW BRIDGE STREET, BLACKFRIARS.

1824.

[*Price Three Shillings.*]

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LONDON:

SHACKELL AND ARROWSMITH, JOHNSON'S-COURT.

TO

JAMES St. AUBYN, ESQ.

AS

A TOKEN OF ESTEEM AND SINCERE REGARD

THIS

COMEDY

IS

INSCRIBED BY HIS FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

Lady Car. Braymore. What do you think the world would call such conduct?

Servant. Very *dirty*, indeed, my Lady.

COLMAN, *the younger.*

Now that the THEATRE-ROYAL ELLISTON, at the corner of Brydges-Street, near Catherine-Street, in the Strand, is closed, I may fairly venture to notice a recent little proceeding of its great director. I abstained from so doing while that Gentleman's Theatre was open, and he had yet an opportunity of "redeeming his pledge" to the public, lest littleness, or ill-nature, might infer that I did so with the intention of exciting a prejudice unfavourable to his "petite" Comedy, announced under the title of *Married and Single.* It is impossible, now, that any such motive can be imputed to me, for, not only is the ELLISTON THEATRE closed, but, prior to its close (after various promises, and delays, and apologies, and pledges, and excuses) the advertisement of that piece entirely disappeared from the ELLISTON play-bills. Whether MR. ELLISTON generally redeem his pledges to that "public, with whom it is ever his pleasure and pride to be punctual," or whether he do not, is a matter between the public and Mr. ELLISTON: with that I, individually, have nothing to do: but as I am somewhat a party in the pre-

sent case, I am persuaded that my interference will not be considered impertinent. Taking this for granted, I shall "state a few stubborn facts"—I beg pardon for using a favourite phrase of Mr. ELLISTON's—and though somewhat, perhaps, at the expence of brevity, I must begin at the beginning, and state my "stubborn facts" circumstantially. This done, I shall leave the public to form its own opinion respecting the conduct of the great Director of that "great and important national establishment," the THEATRE ROYAL —*at the corner of Brydges-Street.**

It is now upwards of eighteen months since I read a French Drama called *Le Célibataire et l'homme Marié.* The piece, though not remarkable either for wit or humour in its dialogue, nor exhibiting even the shadow of a character, yet contained three or four ludicrous situations. Those who are at all acquainted with the French Theatre are aware that such a material is insufficient for the English stage; and that by a mere plodding *translation*, made with the help of *Nugent's* Pocket-Dictionary, it would no more become an English Comedy, than a French Melodrama, by similar drudgery, would start forth an English Tragedy. The piece, too, contained one capital defect: the author did not accomplish his own intention,

* I am one of the many who no longer acknowledge the existence of a Theatre Royal DRURY-LANE. DRURY-LANE THEATRE is associated in one's memory with the names of GARRICK! and SHERIDAN! and JOHN KEMBLE! who were, in succession, its managers. Mr. ELLISTON is a gentleman at the head of a larger sort of Olympic Pavilion, or Royal Circus, glittering with gold, and as fine as gingerbread, in which, in the course of his last season, he produced *one* Opera and *three* Melodramas. But poor DRURY was burnt down to the ground several years ago; and though its ancient site is encumbered with a building, and a few of its old professional ornaments still fondly linger about the spot, the SPIRIT of DRURY lies prostrate, and buried in the dust.

which was, professedly, to exhibit the various advantages and disadvantages incident to the two states of marriage and celibacy. However, such of its materials as were available, I determined to appropriate to my own purposes: and thought that, by remodelling the piece;—by partly abandoning its original intention as belonging to a higher order of Comedy;—by making its leading object the exposure, in the person of a Sexagenary Dandy, of the *folly* merely, of living in the "double state of *Married and Single*;"—by the introduction of other new characters, principal as well as subordinate, consequently of other new scenes and situations;*—and by attempting to enliven the whole by as pleasant a dialogue as my limited powers would allow me to supply:—I thought that (as in the case of *Simpson and Co.* which is also founded on a French piece) something agreeable to an English audience might be the result of my efforts.

A sketch of *Married and Single* was made, and two acts were nearly finished, when, early in the last December, a

* I may take this opportunity of saying, that although the idea of BEAU SHATTERLY was first suggested to me by the *M. Boissec*, in *Le Ci-devant Jeune Homme*, I am under no obligation whatever to the piece, except for the general outline of that character—a bold one, certainly—which I have filled up in the way best suitable to the exigencies of my own plan. *L'homme de Soixante Ans*, another of the supposed sources of *Married and Single*, I have never seen, nor did I ever hear of it till *after* the performance of my Comedy. Of the other additions and alterations above alluded to, Mrs. SHATTERLY, SCAMPER, the CRAMWELLS, and CAPTAIN O'RAPPER, are new characters; the BICKERTONS are considerably extended; a vulgar, Sheriff's officer is converted into FERRET, a dapper young attorney; and the greater part of the first act, and the whole of the third, —one situation excepted—are, as far as I am aware, my own. I must apologize for saying so much on the subject, but the very intent of this preface renders these explanations necessary.

meeting with Mr. Elliston was proposed to me, with a view to the accommodation of certain differences then existing, *and still existing*, between that gentleman and myself. We met. In the course of our conversation, Mr. E. inquired of me whether I was acquainted with a French piece entitled *Le Celibataire et l'homme Marié:* "for," said he, "I "have received a *flat, dull translation of it*, under the title "of *Married and Single!* and it is, at the same time, *so* "*vulgar*, (a bailiff talking slang all the way through, "being the leading part,) that though I have bought it and "paid for it, *it is quite useless to me ! ! !*" Mr. E. added, that if I chose, he would submit the thing to me that I might see whether, since it contained two or three good situations, it could be "trimmed up." I told Mr. E. that a flat, dull translation as he described it to be, could be of no service to me, and that I would not even look at it, having long been engaged on the same subject, which I was treating in my own way. Mr. E. then expressed a wish to see mine. "This thing, Sir, cannot stand in the way of anything you may do, for——" (An author's vanity may be surely pardoned the public boast of ranking high in the opinion of Mr. Elliston,)—"you are a clever dramatist, and whatever you do must be well done." But, somehow or other, I did not, at the time, appreciate the compliment as I ought to have done,—at any rate, it did not *take*—for I told Mr. E. that he should neither see that, nor any thing else of mine, until certain points at issue between us were satisfactorily arranged. The next morning after this, I shewed my papers (bearing that very title of *Married and Single*) to the gentleman at whose house the meeting had taken place, and this I did for a reason which I explained to him, though as it does not immediately form a part of my present business with Mr. E. it would be needless to repeat it here.

I am conscious that all this detail is as painfully dull as a melo-drama: yet it cannot be avoided.

Some weeks subsequent to this, (in January last) I again had the honour of an interview with the Great Director in his own private room, and in the presence of the gentleman already alluded to. Again a proposition was made to me to let him see my *Married and Single*, he still retaining his opinion of the *utter worthlessness of his own !!!* Mr. E. even suggested that it might form the basis of a new arrangement between us. After a long conversation with him, and notwithstanding its result was a very considerable augmentation of my habitual and well-known respect for the Great Director, it so happened—(what could I have been thinking of at the time?)—that I once more positively refused to let him see that or any thing else of mine.

The next time I had the gratification of beholding the great Director was in his own box-office. This happened early in February. Few words had passed between us, when Mr. E. came round to the old point. Had I any thing for him? I told Mr. E. I had a *three-act* comedy (at these words the great Director, who was writing a letter, put down his pen)—but that many points must be settled between us before it could be for *him*. "A three-act comedy, Sir? *that is the very thing I want.* Dine with me to-day, and let me hear it.—Every thing shall be settled to your satisfaction." Now remember: *a* THREE-ACT COMEDY *was the very thing he wanted!* I declined the honour of his invitation to dinner, but—after some consideration—consented to read two acts, (the third not then being in a finished state) in the Great Director's own room, in his own theatre, at night.

The important moment arrived.—The Great Director was *prepared* to hear two acts of a THREE-ACT *comedy*—"*the very thing he wanted;*" and he was *aware* that that comedy was the very MARRIED AND SINGLE (for I told him so explicitly and distinctly) which he had more than once desired

to see—under which same title he had a MS. lying *useless* on his shelves. HE WAS PREPARED FOR ALL THIS. He heard me read the first and second acts of MARRIED AND SINGLE, *word for word, as they are now acted at the Haymarket Theatre*—the very copy from which I read, being, without any alteration, the identical one now used by the prompter.

I believe I have made this statement so distinctly, that it cannot be misunderstood.

And now I will allow any *gentleman* a month to guess what was the Great Director's first remark at the termination of the reading of a three act Comedy, which was the very thing he wanted: but since no *gentleman* can guess it, I had better tell.

"That is all very well, Sir; *but a three-act comedy* IS OF NO SORT OF USE TO MY ESTABLISHMENT!!!"

"And pray, Mr. ELLISTON, did not you, yourself, tell me this very morning, that a three-act Comedy was the very thing you wanted? And was it not, on that very understanding, that I consented to read it to you?" "Yes, Sir,—that's very true—but—in short—a—that is—a—my —a—opinion."

Now I think *this* is pretty well for a Great Director of a "national establishment;" but I will allow any *man of honour* a year to guess the Great Director's next remark.

"Besides, Sir, though you have made many judicious alterations, it so happens that I have put my manuscript into the hands of a gentleman of genius, *who has hit upon many of the same.*"

"Indeed!!! and the character of Beau Shatterly? has he happened to hit upon that too?" "No, Sir, but—I think that *a failure*—besides we have had that character over and over again on our stage."

"Name one instance, Mr. Elliston."

I expected, of course, to hear of Lord Ogleby; but even this did not occur to the clear-headed great Director:

although he has since told me (when I repeated this to him in the presence of other persons,) that he did instance *Plethora.*

What excuse can be suggested for this I don't know; nor is it for me to invent excuses for Mr. ELLISTON; but just for the sake of a halt in this long, dull tale (yet long and dull as it is I must get through it), pray reader turn back to the two lines quoted under the word PREFACE, and after that we will proceed.

The interview concluded by Mr. ELLISTON saying, that though he admitted my piece to be the best of the two, yet, in his JUDGMENT, neither of them could succeed—meaning thereby, neither the *Married and Single* now successfully acting at the Haymarket, nor (to use his own words,) the "flat, dull, translation" in his possession.

Now what if I shew that this "flat, dull translation"—the thing thus stigmatized by Mr. ELLISTON himself, is that very same "Petite" Comedy boldly announced to the Public, by Mr. ELLISTON himself, as entitled to peculiar consideration on the ground of its "merits?"

No sooner was MARRIED AND SINGLE announced in the Haymarket bills, for performance on Saturday the 17th of July, than the Great Director advertised a piece, bearing a similar title, for Friday the 16th. To say nothing of this as an *honourable* proceeding, here is a distinct "pledge to the public," given by Mr. ELLISTON. Now did Mr. ELLISTON give that pledge *knowing* that he could *not* redeem it? His own play-bills of a later date than the one alluded to, *prove* that at the time he gave it, he was not in possession of the license, without which, *he did know*, he could not act the piece. On the day prior to his promised performance, 15th July, he announces that his piece "is from peculiar circumstances obliged to be postponed till next week." On Monday the 19th, the piece is positively announced for the fol-

lowing Wednesday; but on Tuesday appears at the head of the ELLISTON play-bills, a long unintelligible jumble of words, implying something very like a desire to *sneak out* of the affair altogether. Yet since this jumble seems also intended to insinuate something wide of the truth, I shall presently take the trouble of picking it to pieces, and exposing, at once, its dishonesty and its folly. Wednesday comes, but brings no Married and Single with it. On the day following (Thursday) it is pompously announced that "yesterday at two o'clock—(to a man so punctual as Mr. ELLISTON in the "redemption of his pledges," it was, of course, important that the public should be apprised of the very hour)—the license arrived," and that the piece "should be produced, *if possible*," (there seemed something very ominous in this "if possible,") "before the close of the season."

Did not Mr. Elliston, at that time, know whether it was possible or not? Did not Mr. Elliston announce, in that very bill, the close of the theatre for the following Monday, with a specification of the performances for each of the three remaining nights, even to a SONG?—Pooh! Mr. ELLISTON!

However Mr. ELLISTON is now in possession of the requisite license; and here is a glorious opportunity for this "redeemer of pledges" to redeem one of his own. But no, he does not. After wriggling backwards and forwards; after shuffling in and shuffling out, the Theatre Royal, Brydges-street, is closed for the season, and the pledge made to that public "with whom it is ever Mr. ELLISTON's pleasure and pride to be punctual,"—IS UNREDEEMED!—Fie! Mr. ELLISTON.

But I have made a pledge to expose the *dishonesty and the gross folly* of a Brydges-street play-bill advertisement: and I hereby proceed to redeem my pledge. The advertisement is as follows: *verbatim* from the bill of July 20:—

"THE NEW PETITE COMEDY,

Under the Title *(which has been adopted at another Theatre)*

OF

MARRIED AND SINGLE,

WILL be Acted as soon as the Lord Chamberlain's license arrives. Circumstances render it proper to explain, that this Comedy has been, since November last, in the Manager's possession; and the subject having been previously declined by the rival Theatres, it was reserved, from a supposition of the improbability of competition, to receive that fair chance early in the next Season, to which its merits were thought to entitle it, and which the productions then already in a course of success rendered it difficult to give it during this. Although the peculiar circumstances which call for the postponement, will throw back the performance to a period when it must appear under every disadvantage; yet nothing but imperious necessity will prevent Mr. Elliston from redeeming the pledge already given to the Public, with whom it is ever his pleasure and pride to be punctual."

Now, what, in the name of Common Sense, is the meaning of this idiotic, imbecile farrago? I do really acquit *even* Mr. ELLISTON of the honour of its authorship; and so far from imagining he could have sat down deliberately to write such *stuff*, I am persuaded, that he would scarcely have, extemporaneously, gabbled such nonsense, in one of his nightly addresses, to his suffering audiences. It conveys no *direct* meaning; and all the *insinuations* it seems intended to convey, are, as far as they are intelligible, absolute, downright falsehoods.

The phrase, "The title which has been *adopted* at another Theatre," *insinuates* a falsehood.

The phrase, "The subject having been previously declined by *the rival Theatres*," (if meant to apply to my Comedy) *asserts* a falsehood.

The "supposition of the improbability of competition,"

can only be the supposition of a blockhead. Mr. ELLISTON himself, I am sure, did not suppose so, for *he* knew that nothing was more probable, since I was at liberty to present my Comedy wherever I pleased.

That Mr. ELLISTON's Petite Comedy "was reserved" to receive that "fair chance, early in the next season, to which its MERITS were thought to entitle it," *cannot* be true; for I have already stated Mr. ELLISTON's own opinion of its MERITS, by him, more than once, unequivocally expressed; and, that the thing announced for performance at the Brydges-street Theatre, was no other than the "*flat, dull translation*" alluded to, *without alteration or improvement*, Mr. ELLISTON himself assured me, on the evening of the 18th July, 1824!!!

As to the "productions already in a course of success rendering it difficult to give it that fair chance this season," (meaning the last)—that is mere absurdity. What has Mr. ELLISTON produced, since last November, to prevent the performance of a two-act piece, *if he thought it worth performing?*—NOTHING *. And during the best and most favourable part of the season for the production of novelty,—

* The following is a list of the 'Novelties' produced last season at the THEATRE ROYAL, *Brydges-street*," whose course of success rendered it difficult to give" the "petite" Comedy, in two acts "that fair chance of success to which its merits entitled it."

THE CATARACT.	A *Melodrama!*—	27th Oct. 1823.
THE FLYING CHEST.	A *Pantomime!!*	26th Dec. ——
KENILWORTH,	A *Drama*, with HORSES!!!	5th Jan. 1824.
PHILANDERING.	An Opera. (Mirabile dictu!)	13th Jan. ——
RUMFUSTIAN.	*A Burlesque Interlude!!!!*	24th Feb. ——
ZOROASTER.	*Another Melodrama!!!!!*	19th April, ——
REVOLT OF THE GREEKS.	*Another Melodrama!!!!!!*	10th June, ——

One opera, one pantomime, three melodramas, and a burlesque interlude constitute the DRAMATIC labours of the THEATRE ROYAL, BRYDGES STREET, for the season 1823-4!!!

THEATRE ROYAL? PATENT? LEGITIMATE? NATIONAL THEATRE?

It savours strongly of the Olympic Pavilion and the Royal, Circus, does it not, Mr. ELLISTON? "But what's bred in the bone"—The proverb is somewhat musty!

from the 14th January till the 19th April, a period of three calendar months and five days—Mr. ELLISTON *did not produce one single novelty*,—a Burlesque Tragedy, in *One* Act, excepted.

For the rest of this choice morsel, about "redeeming pledges,"—and the public, "to whom it is Mr. ELLISTON's "pleasure and pride," &c. it is—excuse the terms—mere play-bill CANT and HUMBUG.

Is it not *melancholy* to witness the emanation of such proceedings from within the walls of a Theatre-Royal, which once was Drury Lane! Where GARRICK and SIDDONS, and JOHN KEMBLE once trod! Where the genius of SHERIDAN once presided! A Theatre of which BYRON predicted better things, and of whose predictions this MR. ELLISTON himself was made the organ!*

Mr. ELLISTON's motive for merely announcing the piece—for he did not act it after all his "pledges"—is evident. But I ask Mr. ELLISTON upon his honour, whether, had *Married and Single* never been announced at the Haymarket Theatre, he would ever have ventured to insult the public by the promise of performing what he himself declared to be a "flat, dull translation, so vulgar, withal, that, though he had bought and paid for it, it was quite useless to him?"

Answer this question as you may, Mr. ELLISTON, I will indulge you with repeating those epithets which it seems to be generally your ambition,—"your pride and pleasure"—to deserve: FAIR, OPEN, CANDID, HONEST, HONOURABLE, LIBERAL, HIGH-MINDED, GENTLEMANLY. That you will spare me the trouble of appropriating them, there is no doubt.

And so, for the present, good-day to you—MISTER—ELLISTON.

* Has Mr. Elliston forgotten that he delivered Lord Byron's Address at the opening of the new theatre?

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

BEAU SHATTERLY - - - - - -	*Mr. W. Farren.*
BICKERTON - - - - - - - - -	*Mr. Pope.*
MELFORD - - - - - - - - - -	*Mr. Cooper.*
FERRET (a young Attorney) - - -	*Mr. W. West.*
SCAMPER (Shatterly's servant) - -	*Mr. Vining.*
CAPTAIN O'RAPPER - - - - -	*Mr. Lee*
MR. CRAMWELL . - - - - - -	*Mr. Coveney.*
OFFICER - - - - - - - - - -	*Mr. C. Jones.*
MRS. SHATTERLY - - - - - -	*Mrs. C. Jones.*
MRS. BICKERTON - - - - -	*Mrs. Glover.*
FANNY - - - - - - - - - -	*Mrs. T. Hill.*
MRS. CRAMWELL - - - - -	*Mrs. Coveney.*

Visitors at Shatterly's, Servants, &c.

MARRIED AND SINGLE.

ACT I.

SCENE 1.—*A Room at* SHATTERLY'S, *tastefully ornamented*—SCAMPER *discovered asleep in a Chair at the fire-side—Near him is a Table with Breakfast.*

Enter MELFORD.

Melford. Scamper! Scamper! — What, asleep at this time o'day!

Scamper. Bless me! I beg pardon, Sir; but one must sleep at some time in the four-and-twenty hours, and your uncle, my master, leads such a life that I seldom close my eyes at night.

Mel. At what time did he come home this morning?

Scamp. Past five, Sir; and so it has been for months past: yet (as I think) not for any great pleasure he has in it, but that the neighbours, whom he takes good care to disturb by his knocking, may set him down for a profligate young fellow, who keeps bad hours. Turned of sixty, as he is, and a married man, too, 'tis really too bad.

Mel. Ha! ha! ha!—My uncle, Mr. Gudgeonton Shatterly! poor old gentleman! I am told that, when young and a bachelor, he was the steadiest fellow in the universe, and exhibited nothing of the gaiety and levity of youth; so he seeks a compensation for neglected pleasures in the affectation of those qualities at a time of life when they are an incumbrance to him, and often lead into scrapes, from which, for want of skill and experience, he seldom escapes without ridicule.

Scamp. He dreads ridicule more than death, so beware of laughing at him, Sir. Humour his whim of passing for a gay, dashing bachelor of five-and-twenty; swear that Beau Shatterly, Dandy Shatterly, as he likes to be called, is the mirror of fashion, and a model for the young fellows of the day, and you may do with him what you will.

Mel. Not I: I am entirely dependent on him, so I'll say nothing to displease him; but hang it, I'll not flatter his follies. But to matters more pressing. Have you seen Ferret, the attorney to my creditor Fleece?

Scamp. I have, Sir; and this is the substance of his discourse: my client wants his money;—my client must have his money;—my client will have his money.

Mel. The old song.

Scamp. Yes, Sir; but with an additional verse. He has positive orders to proceed against you. He says that, for his own part, he shall be very sorry—and so forth.

Mel. Sorry! at the prospect of a good bill of costs! In such cases, though I've met with many a sorry attorney, I never knew an attorney sorry.

Scamp. I entreated a few days delay, when he should be paid; and assured him that, at this moment, you have not twenty pounds in your possession.

Mel. Well!

Scamp. "That's no affair of mine," said he, "Mr. Melford must instantly pay principal, interest, and costs." "But with scarcely twenty pounds," said I, "how is he to pay upwards of two hundred?"

Mel. Very ingeniously put. That was rather a poser!

Scamp. So I thought; but what think you he replied? That you must raise heaven and earth but this money must be instantly paid. "Mr. Ferret," said I—for I began to lose patience—"Mr. Melford will be happy to raise heaven and earth, overturn the ocean, set the four elements at loggerheads, or do any other reasonable thing you may propose; but to give you money till he has money to give you, is a feat very far beyond his skill. Have a little patience and your client shall be paid." All my eloquence was thrown away, and he is determined to proceed.

Mel. What the devil is to be done? Should my uncle learn that I am in debt, I am ruined; and an arrest would discover all.

Scamp. No, no; he thinks you a very sober, orderly young man, vigilantly following your profession of portrait painter. No, he must be the last in the world to know it. But have you no friend? Mr. Bickerton, for instance.

Mel. What! Bickerton, my intended brother-in-law! He tells every thing to his wife, who has no more consideration for consequences than a cannon ball; and to trust her with a

secret would be a speedier way of circulating it about town than by an advertisement in the Gazette.

Scamp. Why not apply to your friend Callous—or Sleek? You have often assisted one, and have helped to advance the fortunes of the other.

Mel. I have done so, but to no purpose. With Sleek, one is always a day too late. "My dear fellow, if you had but mentioned it yesterday."

Scamp. And Mr. Callous, I suppose, belongs to the other set, who do all sorts of kind things except the very thing one requires.

Mel. Exactly so: "My dear friend, 'tis the only thing on earth I'd refuse; but I make it a rule,—I'd refuse my own brother, my father, my grandfather." Hang such curs! for I verily believe they would not break their amiable rule, were it to save the whole human race, their dear selves excepted, from perdition.

Scamp. That's right, Sir; rail against those hounds who stuff that part of their bosoms with cold-blooded rules, which, in nobler spirits, like your own, is brimful of generosity.

Mel. Yet generally have I observed such to be exactly those who have fattened and thriven on other mens' liberalities.

SHATTERLY (*without*) *calls* SCAMPER.

But hark! my uncle is stirring. I'll begone. You may just sound him and learn whether it would be prudent to risk asking his assistance in this affair.

Scamp. I will, Sir.

Mel. And endeavour to keep a watch on Ferret's movements, and bring me word of his proceedings to my lodgings.

Scamp. You forget that your uncle gives a grand entertainment this evening, and that I have a world of things to do. However, Sir, I'll not be idle. But quick—away!

Mel. Oh, let me but escape the clutches of that rascal Ferret, I'll never more place my freedom at the mercy of a creditor; but renounce my follies, forswear debt, marry, and secure my liberty for the rest of my days.

[*Exit.*

Scamp. Marry, and secure his liberty!—Well, between uncle and nephew, a tolerably fatiguing life I have of it. One prevents my sleeping o'nights, t'other keeps me awake all day. Then the shifts I am put to, that I may assist Mr. Melford without the knowledge of——

SHATTERLY (*without*) Scamper! Scamper!

Scamp. Here, Sir.—Here he comes, the plaguy old blockhead! pale and jaded, after a night's revels, yet striving to look brisk and sparkling,—like a glass of stale Champagne stirred with a biscuit.

Enter SHATTERLY.

Well, Sir, how do you find yourself this morning?

Shat. Never better in my life! Merely a slight head-ache—stomach rather uneasy—nerves somewhat agitated; but that's a trifle, a tribute we young fellows are bound to pay to pleasure. We drank consumedly last night. Is my breakfast ready? (*sits down at the table.*)

Scamp. What will you eat, Sir?

Shat. Nothing. Give me some tea—strong—strong. We dined at the Clarendon, and, 'gad, we made the welkin ring. Five of us—all prime fellows! Lord Skinflint, the Honourable Bob Flatterton, Captain Cringe, Sir Harry Spunge, and, though last not least, Invincible Shatterly, as Flatterton calls me. We drank pretty freely of those true fountains of wit and eloquence, Burgundy and Champagne; and I—'gad I intended one of the best jokes against the Baronet that ever was imagined.

Scamp. Indeed, Sir!

Shat. Ha! ha! ha! He happened to talk of a certain engagement he had for the evening—the fool! to mention such a thing in my hearing!—so I determined to make an example of him, leave him under the table, and then—Ha! ha! ha! But Cringe whispering me, that I being the best man of the party by two bottles, it wouldn't be a fair match, I took pity on him; so, at twelve, we all adjourned.

Scamp. And high time you should, Sir.

Shat. We adjourned to the Opera, and there I saw—'gad, and she saw me too. The Colonel was with her, looking as black as thunder, for he perceived me slyly casting one of my irresistibles at her. The poor Colonel!—However, we all returned to our quarters at the Clarendon, and there with a deviled biscuit and Champagne punch, we soberly finished the evening—at five in the morning.

Scamp. (*aside*) At his expense as usual, I suppose.—And who was the sufferer, Sir?

Shat. The sufferer! Each man his share, you blockhead. Though Lord Skinflint and Sir Harry happening to have left their purses at home, and Cringe and Flatterton happening

not to have any money about them, why—I undertook to settle the bill. As Flatterton says, I understand that sort of thing better than any man in London.

Scamp. I believe you took the same trouble the other day, at the Bedford, Sir.

Shat. No; that was the Baronet's affair: we dined with him by invitation.

Scamp. And did Sir Harry Spunge pay?

Shat. That I'll swear he did, for I lent him the money. Another cup, Scamper.

Scamp. Ah! Sir, if you would but reform—only a little. But night after night—three—four—five o'clock! Why, Sir, your very neighbours——

Shat. Hang the neighbours. But what do they say of me? Come, tell me; don't flatter. I fear they say I'm a damn'd dissipated young dog, don't they?

Scamp. (aside) Young dog!—the old puppy.

Shat. As to the riot on Monday night, that was the Captain's fault, not mine; he must needs fling a penny-piece at the gas lamp. Confound the inventors of gas-light, say I; there is no doing any thing in the dark now. Smash went the brittle, crack went the rattles; the Captain knock'd down one watchman, and ran off, leaving me to knock down the other; *(rises)* but before I could make up my mind whether to treat him with a facer, or double him up by a cross-buttock——

Scamp. The unscientific rascal knock'd you down with a club-stick.

Shat. Exactly so; so I gave him a crown to pick me up again, and there the matter ended.

Scamp. Only five shillings for a broken head! —You had it a dead bargain I declare.

Shat. Why, you sneering dog——

Scamp. Oh, not I, Sir; you have a right to do as you please.

Shat. To be sure I have; I'm my own master—I'm of age. Has any one dared to insinuate that I'm not of age?

Scamp. Oh, no, Sir; *(aside)* not for the last thirty years at least. [*A knock at the door.*

Shat. Go, see who's there. (*Exit* SCAMPER.) I *am* my own master, though a husband; and I may say, what few married men can, that to marriage I am indebted for the happiest event of my life—the separation from my wife.

Re-enter SCAMPER *with a letter.*

Scamp. A letter, Sir.

Shat. Ah! ha!—a female hand! 'Tis from Julia! *(reads)* "Dear, but indiscreet Shatterly, "the Colonel observed you last night."—I told you so.—"A little bill to my milliner—torments "me to death;—twenty-five pounds;—you are "the only soul on earth to whom I could men- "tion this little vexation."—That poor thing is strangely taken with me! I don't know why, but 'gad so it is. *(Looks at the letter again)* "You are the only soul on earth." This delicate preference is a proof of her affection: whenever she wants money she gives me the preference.

Scamp. Aye, the dear creature! when she gives you the preference she wants money.

Shat. Let Ranter be saddled; I'll ride today.

Scamp. What! Ranter, Sir! You'd better not venture on her again.

Shat. (*angrily*) Let Ranter be ready for me at my nephew's door in an hour.

Scamp. (*aside*) I'll venture to sound him.—Ah, Sir! your poor nephew! poor Mr. Melford!

Shat. My poor nephew! What the devil do you mean by my poor nephew? He's the happiest fellow in the world. He's a bachelor—has a fine profession; I allow him three hundred a-year; he does not owe a sixpence, and——

Scamp. True, Sir; but he's young, and suppose (I merely say suppose) he had got into debt for a few hundreds—four or five—or two hundred, or so——

Shat. If I thought he owed as many pence, I'd stop his allowance, and cut him off with a shilling. Let him follow my example; I hav'n't a debt in the universe; and, unlike most other young men of the time, I can snap my fingers at the bailiffs, and sally forth in the morning without fear of passing my evening in a sponging-house or a gaol. I hold the very thought in abhorrence.

Scamp. (*aside*) There's no hope in this quarter.

Shat. Come, help me to dress. Is every thing ready?

Scamp. Yes, Sir; (*taking the articles from a chair*)—calf-stockings, shoulder-pads, stays, teeth, false-top and whiskers.

Shat. Is the drawing-room prepared for the evening?

Scamp. Yes, Sir; but I am afraid the library will be rather dark, unless we put another sconce or two there.

Shat. So much the better; it will be just the thing for the card-tables and old women. Be sure you call and remind Wade about the ices and supper. I've no notion of keeping one's friends half through the night, and sending them

away with a lemon-chip and a glass of *crema-tarta*. 'Gad, when Young Shatterly does the thing, there's no one in London can do it better. Come, help me to dress. (*Sings*)

When did morning ever break,
And find such beaming eyes awake
As those that glisten here?
Oh, stay!

[*He is seized with a fit of coughing;* SCAMPER *runs to the table, takes a small box, and puts a lozenge into* SHATTERLY'S *mouth, who goes off with an affected activity, and singing; followed by* SCAMPER.

SCENE II.—*A Street.*

Enter Young FERRET, *followed by two Officers.*

Fer. You neither of you know Mr. Melford, you say.

Officer. No, Sir.

Fer. Nor do I; but I'm told he's a desperate fighting fellow, and will resist any open violence. Now this is my plan:—(*Enter* SCAMPER, *who listens*)—I'll call at his lodgings and identify his person, while you two, with the writ, will remain in the coach at the corner of the street. I'll entice him out, by telling him two ladies are waiting for him—no doubt he's too gallant a man to refuse such an invitation—and then we have him quietly.

Scamp. So, so! [*Exit.*

Officer. That's a mighty fine scheme, Master Ferret, yet I think the old plan the best; (*taps him on the shoulder*) a little business, Sir, if you please. Ha! ha! ha!

Fer. Pooh! Mr. Melford is an artist, conse-

quently a man of taste, and will be delighted at being arrested in so ingenious a manner.

Officer. As a man would like a sound drubbing the better because the stick had a gold head to it. But manage it your own way, Sir. You law gentlemen are always for taking the crooked road, though the straight one be the surest. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE 3.—MELFORD'S *Painting Room.*—MELFORD *discovered at his Easel; after a minute or two he starts up.*

Mel. I am not in a humour for painting. This confounded threat of Ferret's distracts my attention; an arrest at such a moment would be fatal to all my hopes, and——

(*A tap at the door*, MELFORD *alarmed.*)

Who's there?

Scamp. (*without.*) 'Tis I — Scamper — open —quick, Sir.

[MELFORD *opens the door.*

Enter SCAMPER.

Scamp. Beware—beware of an invitation to join two ladies in a coach: 'tis young Ferret, with a couple of bailiffs (*going.*)

Mel. But explain.

Scamp. I haven't time. I overheard the plot, so beware.

Mel. What says my Uncle?

Scamp. There's no hope of assistance from him. He's coming, so get to your easel, and appear to be mighty industrious: I must be off. [*Exit.*

Mel. Here's a pretty business! Entrap me in this way, the treacherous rascal! Oh that I were married, and secure from the plagues and

dangers of a bachelor's life! A life of liberty at the best; but as for happiness—ah me! Rise in the morning, breakfast alone, read the debates, kick the pavement in Bond-street, or Regent's-street, and stare for an hour at Mac Adam's stone chippers, pick one's teeth in the gloomy corner of a chop-house, gape at a Melodrama, or go as harlequin to a masquerade, and walk about with one's hands in one's breeches pockets, return home, to bed, breakfast, and so on to the end of the chapter. But married! a wife, children, a fireside, tea-kettle singing, pussey frisking on the hearth-rug! O that I were married!

Shat. (*without.*) Very well, I know the way.

Mel. Here comes my uncle, Beau Shatterly. Ha! ha! ha! He looks for all the world like a specimen of the dandy breed, stuff'd and dried for preservation in a Museum. Yet what an enviable old fellow he would be, if he would but live with his wife.---(*Places himself at his easel.*) As my favourite poet says:

> "Marriage, of every human *good* the *best!*
> "For, *blest* in wedlock, one is doubly *blest.*"

Enter SHATTERLY, *drest in the extreme of the fashion.*

Shat. There he is, hard at work. That's the man I envy. Single, free, independent, living alone, doing as he pleases, no *better half* to gainsay him. To be sure I live like a bachelor, but then conscience sometimes tells me I am married. I am but a counterfeit, a sort of Brummagem bachelor, while he is the real thing; I'm a poacher on the manor of celibacy; I'm a swindler, obtaining unmatrimonial pleasures under false pretences. What the deuce

had I to do to marry? Marriage is a damper, a wet blanket, it paralyses a man's wit, and lays his spirit up with a rheumatism! Oh, that I were single again! for, as my favourite poet says:

> "Marriage, of every human *ill* the *worst!*
> "For, *curst* in wedlock, one is doubly *curst.*"

Ahem! what Harry, Harry Melford.

Mel. (*affecting surprise, comes forward.*) Bless my soul, Sir, I beg you a thousand pardons. I—I was so intent,—just giving a few touches to your portrait.

Shat. That's right: occupation for a young man—I mean for a very young man, is—

Mel. You mean to give me a sitting this morning, don't you, Sir?

Shat. No, I come merely to remind you of my party to-night. It will be a prime thing, that I can tell you. You'll meet there—(*adjusting his Nephew's collar.*)—A most barbarous display! Here, here's your model, the Shatterly cut, my own invention. (*looking at himself.*) I think upon the whole I do, Eh?

Mel. (*aside*) An insufferable old coxcomb! I wish a man might cane his own uncle.

Shat. Do you know, Harry, I am all impatience for this evening, and have been for this month past.—You shall give me your opinion of a certain lady who will be there—rather turn'd of forty to be sure, but then,—that's all.

Mel. Very well, very well indeed, Sir; but what says Mrs. Shatterly to all this?

Shat. Which,—Mrs.—Shatterly?

Mel. Your wife!

Shat. (*aside, with an expression of disgust*) My wife!—You know, my dear fellow,—young

fellows like you and I, my fine fellow—damme—

Mel. Yet, but a few minutes ago, I was thinking what a happy man you might be. So often too as I have heard you praise her.

Shat. Aye, she's—she's a capital wife to praise; but praising one's wife, and living with one's wife, are very different things I assure you. It was my misfortune to marry too young in life.

Mel. (*aside*) Ha! ha! ha! at fifty, twelve years ago.

Shat. I was a child, a mere baby, damme. No man ought to marry till he is sixty,—till he has sown his wild oats.

Mel. Sow at sixty, and what do you expect to reap? However, Sir, 'tis your own affair, and though the world might say—

Shat. The world can say nothing. Mrs. Shatterly is of weak health, retired habits, doatingly fond of the country, and so—I have an apartment for her at Kensington. There she is in free air, and close to the Royal Gardens—a walk fit for an Empress; and if the Serpentine happen to he frozen on the first of January, and I happen to be in that neighbourhood to skate, I always call and pay her a new-year's visit—and what the devil more could any reasonable woman desire?

Mel. 'Tis strange! you, married, are struggling for the freedom of a bachelor; whilst I, single, am sighing for the bliss of matrimony.

Shat. Marry, marry, marry! a happy marriage is heaven upon earth. (*aside*) I never discourage young beginners; the more companions in misfortune the merrier.—Marry, and when once the nuptial knot is tied, you must be hap-

py—as all married people are, in common decency, bound to be.

Mel. You are pleased to be merry, Sir.

Shat. At our age "What should a man do but be merry?" But no, Harry, you are my own kin, my own nephew, I wouldn't advise you to your harm; so keep out of the scrape as long as you can, my boy.—Ha! here comes Mr. and Mrs. Bickerton.

Mel. Happy couple! I look at him and would take example.

Shat. Ah, you fool! look at me, and take warning.

Enter Mr. *and* Mrs. Bickerton.

Shat. My dear Madam,—(*bows*)—Bickerton, my boy, delighted to see you. (*to Melford*)—he's the pleasantest fellow in the world.

Mrs. B. We come to look at Mr. Melford's picture of you.

Mel. Here it is.

Bick. Wonderfully like indeed!

Shat. Yes, yes, 'tis like—but—

Mel. But what?—

Shat. (*to the others*) Come now, what age do I look there?

Bick. Why, the age you look here: about sixty.

Shat. Ha! ha! ha! ahem!—The fault is, as you say, that it looks consumedly old.

Bick. True, my dear Shatterly; but that fault is yours, 'tis the painter's merit.

Shat. Ha! ha! ha! (*to Melford*) He's the most disagreable dog breathing, with his horse-play wit. But what say you, Madam? Compliment apart.

Mrs. B. Then compliment apart,—

Shat. 'Tis too old. I knew you'd say so. And for general likeness—come—sincerely?

Mrs. B. Why, I must say—

Shat. Perfectly right, Madam. It is not a flattering likeness. The ladies are your only judges. You must retouch it, Melford, and strike off a score years, or so.

Bick. Spite of the parish register!—(*Aside, and twitching him.*)

Shat. Burn the parish register! 'Tis a nuisance, a damn'd impertinent invention! (*half aside.*) If my parents were so absurd as to have me christened sixty years ago, 'tis their affair, not mine; I was too young to prevent it. But I must be off—my horse is at the door. I must take a canter in the Park, and have, besides, twenty visits to make. I shall have the pleasure of seeing you this evening?

Bick. Mrs. Bickerton has already promised you.

Mrs. B. 'Twas your wish, my love.

Shat. That's well. By the by, I must beg of you to lend me a few dozen tea-spoons; and, Harry, you must lend me your new quadrille-tunes. But let me see, for fear of mistake—(*looks at a paper.*)—Invite the Wallis's, and borrow their large silver branches; invite old Frimley—don't much like him, but I must borrow his great punch bowl; invite the Nevilles, and borrow—but I can arrange that by the way—adieu, till evening. Not later than ten. I never boast, but you shall allow that when young Hopeful does entertain his friends. —Adieu! (*sings.*)

The best of all ways
To lengthen our days,
Is to steal, &c.

[*Exit.*

Bick. Young Hopeful! Ha! ha! ha!

Mrs. B. Ought we to go to-night, my love? You know that Mrs. Shatterly is not in town.

Bick. Oh, he's an oddity; besides every body will be there, and 'tis the rule now that nobody need hesitate in doing what every body does. But, Melford, you seem out of spirits.

Mel. 'Tis nothing—a slight vexation.

Bick. No quarrel with Fanny, I hope.

Mrs. B. To tell you the truth, my sister complains that for some time past you have neglected her.

Mel. My sentiments and intentions towards my dear Fanny are unchanged, but—

Bick. I see how it is: you are unwilling, yet, to sacrifice the freedom of a bachelor's life. Yet what are the highest enjoyments you derive from it? With your own sex, a succession of friendships which, usually expire, where they were born, in the fumes of the glass; and with the other—I'll answer for it there remains nothing, at your journey's end, but a few ringlets, black, brown, or auburn; a bundle of amatory epistles tied with a rose-coloured ribbon; and a packet of milliners' bills, each having at the foot of it a brief, but energetic, lecture on your past folly, in the form of a receipt in full.

Mel. Indeed you mistake me; I am sincerely anxious to change my condition, but just at present, I—I cannot explain, but—

Mrs. B. Speak freely, we are your best friends.

Mel. Why then—I have a debt which—

Bick. A debt!

Mel. Be not alarm'd, 'tis the last remnant of my follies—a note of hand for two hundred pounds. A little economy, a little industry in

my profession, will enable me to discharge it; but it is my determination not to take a wife, till I am relieved of all other encumbrances.

Bick. Let not that disquiet you; all my loose cash is engaged, but in three or four days I shall have that sum at my disposal, and you may command it. No ceremony—we are to be brothers, you know.

Mel. That I fear will be too late, for I have just been informed that a certain civil gentleman is preparing to receive me as his guest.

Mrs. B. Who?

Mel. One who, when he does me the honour of inviting me, will not take "no," for an answer, nor receive a prior engagement as an excuse; but, with true English hospitality, will insist on my making his house my home till the business is settled.

Bick. You don't mean an arrest?

Mel. I do, and so does he, and be hang'd to him. Luckily I am aware of his intentions, and of an ingenious scheme he has for seizing me, so that I trust I shall be able to elude him.

Bick. You see to what extremities your extravagancies lead you. Follow my example, marry, (*Taking Mrs. Bickerton's hand,*) marry, and be happy.

Mel. To say the truth, the harmony I have always observed to exist between you and Mrs. Bickerton, has decided me in favour of a married life.

Bick. Our tempers accord.

Mrs. B. Our wishes, our thoughts are the same.

Bick. Our days roll on in undisturbed felicity.

Mrs. B. My desires are never in opposition to Mr. Bickerton's.

Bick. Mrs. Bickerton's will is mine. Understand me, Melford; you must not set me down for an absolute Jerry Sneak neither: for, withal, I maintain that control, that superiority, that steadiness of purpose, so essential to the dignity of the character of husband. For instance, the other day Amelia took it into her head that she must have her Box at the Opera. Ha! ha! ha! With our income the thing was absurd, you know. I remonstrated, she insisted, nor did she relinquish the idea, till I compelled her, by the interposition of the husband's just authority.

Mrs. B. Authority, Mr. Bickerton! you know that had I chosen to maintain my ground, your *authority* would have gone for very little.

Bick. Come, come, my dear, you are beginning to talk nonsense.

Mrs. B. Nonsense! upon my word, Sir, your brutality is insupportable.

Bick. Brutality, Madam! Mrs. Bickerton, your expressions are most offensive.

Mrs. B. (*bursting into tears.*) O, I am an unhappy woman.

Mel. Come, now, drop this unfortunate subject, and be friends.

Bick. Well, I have done; and, since you persist, my love, you shall have your Box at the Opera.

Mrs. B. No, my dear; no doubt you had good reason for refusing me, and I'll not have it.

Bick. Pooh, pooh, my love, you shall.

Mrs. B. I won't, so there let it end.

Bick. We'll speak of this another time, and then we shall see who—

Mel. Silence! I hear my uncle returning.

(*Enter* SHATTERLY, *leaning on* SCAMPER'S *arm.*)

Scam. I advised you not, Sir, I was sure she'd throw you.

Shat. (*perceiving Mrs. B. makes a sign to Scamper.*) Hold your tongue, confound you.

Mrs. B. Have you been thrown from your horse?

Shat. Thrown! N—no, Madam, not absolutely thrown, I merely fell, as it were. I never yet saw the horse that could throw me.

Bick. But it seems you have seen the horse you could fall from.

Shat. I'll bet you twenty guineas that no man in London can fall as I do. Any one may tumble, but to glide down with a certain ease, a grace—

Mrs. B. Ha! ha! ha! Well, Sir, I'm glad you are not hurt. We must take our leave. This evening we meet again.

Shat. Madam, your —— Adieu, Bicky!

Bick. (*to Melford.*) Rely on my promise.

[*Exeunt* MR. *and* MRS. B.

Shat. (*to Scamper.*) You may send Ranter back to the stable. I—I'll not over-work her to-day, for I shall hunt with her on Friday.

Scamp. Very well, Sir. (*to Mel.*) Beware of of the two ladies, Sir. [*Exit.*

Shat. (*aside*) What's that I hear about two ladies. Oh the sly rascal, I suspect——Harry, I say, Harry, is my man Scamper in your confidence?

Mel. What can he mean?—Oh, Sir, I have no confidences for any one.

Shat. Come, I guess what it is: describe

her to me Is she dark or fair, plump or skinny? What's her name? Where does she live?

Mel. You are bantering me. (*Aside*) I wish he'd go, for I must get out of the way.

Shat. Ah! you are a cautious rogue, and won't trust me. Well, 'gad, I don't blame you, for you would not be the first man indebted to Shatterly for——Ha! ha! ha!

Mel. (*aside.*) Does the blockhead imagine I have a mistress!

Shat. Come, Harry, a match; her name; and fifty guineas to a shilling I win her from you.

Mel. If I had such an appendage I should dread your *experience* certainly, for at sixty—

Shat. (*angrily.*) Sixty be hanged. The sneering rascal. But you are in the right to decline it; for I am not a rival to be despised. Well, I'll away. Oh, you may as well give me the quadrille tunes, I'll put them in my pocket.

Mel. I'll fetch them for you, Sir—I shall get rid of him at last. [*Exit.*

Shat. Sixty! They are always thrusting that in my face, What had my father to do to send me poking my nose into the world thirty years too soon. And then my wife! that's something else for them to twist me with. Poor Mrs. Shatterly! I do sometimes think of her though, and wish, for my conscience sake—I were a widower. I should like an opportunity of being revenged on my sly, sneering nephew. The happy, discontented dog! free, at his ease, with a profession which may immortalize his name! (*takes up his palette and brushes, and sits down at the picture*) I can fancy myself in his situation. An enthusiast in art! abandoned to

the impulse of his genius (*he flourishes with a brush.*)

Enter FERRET, *cautiously.*

Fer. That's our man!—a portrait painter!—Doesn't look much like a fighter, though; yet I had best act cautiously. Hist! hist! Mr. Melford!

Shat. (*starts up violently.*) Who's that?

Fer. There is something fierce about him, too. (*Mysteriously*) A word if you please, Sir. Two ladies are below in a coach, and wish to see you.

Shat. Two ladies! (*aside*) this message must be for Harry. This is the mystery. (*As if struck by a sudden thought.*) 'Gad! here's an opportunity! 'twould be a fine feather in my cap—I will—Two ladies waiting for me?—A young one with her *mamma,* eh?—

Fer. Hush! One can't be too cautious when a lady is concerned. How can I be sure you are the person?

Shat You want Mr. Melford, don't you?

Fer. Yes, Sir.

Shat. Then I'm your man.

Fer. You are Mr. Henry—Tiverton—Melford—Portrait Painter?

Shat. Yes, to be sure I am. Who else should I be?

Fer. (*aside*) 'Tis all right.—Come with me, Sir, if you please.

Shat. Quick! quick! Ah ha! you rogue! I'll teach you to sneer at sixty. What a laugh will we have against him this evening! Come, lead the way.

Fer. (*aside*) Capitally done! I didn't think the bird would have given so easily into the snare. [*Exit* SHATTERLY, *followed by* FERRET.

Enter MELFORD.

Mel. Here they are, Sir, I have found them at last. What! gone! his head is so full of his entertainment this evening, that he thinks of nothing else.—(*A noise without, he fastens the door.*)—Ha!—what can that be! I tremble at every sound.—(*A knocking*)--'Tis Scamper!

Enter SCAMPER, *almost breathless.*

Scam. What! you here still, Sir! thank heaven, then, all is safe for the present. I have had such a fright, Sir! I saw a bustle at the corner of the street, and the people about, told me a gentleman had been arrested, and thrust into a coach, after a violent resistance. I caught a glimpse of that young Ferret—the son of the old one—and my heart misgave me.

Mel. Who was the unhappy man?

Scam. Luckily not you, Sir, but some other poor pitiable devil. No doubt they were on their way hither, when they stumbled on him by accident; and having safely lodged him, they'll return and perform the same kind office towards you. So away.

Mel. We'll away by the back door. I'll reward you, Scamper; when sober, you are the trustiest fellow in existence.

Scam. You are right, Sir, I'm the very best fellow in the world, when I'm sober, and I'm ten times a better fellow when I'm drunk.

[*Exeunt.*

END OF ACT THE FIRST.

ACT II.

SCENE 1.—*A Room at a Lock-up House*—SHATTERLY *discovered, sitting in a gloomy Posture —one Candle, having a very long Snuff to it, burning on a table at his Side.*

Shatterly (*after a pause*) By this time my friends are assembled at my house, swallowing my ices, and devouring my supper; whilst I, the hapless founder of the feast, am twirling my thumbs in a spunging-house. What dæmon put it into my head to be so monstrous frolicksome? Two ladies in a coach, indeed! The ill-looking rascals! They clap me into limbo, and (as I have once answered to the name of Melford) they won't let me out again. I cut such a ridiculous figure in this business, that I dare not send for any acquaintance to speak to my person. No; the adventure would be blown about town; the laugh would be against me; gibes, jeers, epigrams, newspaper skits!—I'd pay the money ten times over rather than encounter it. That profligate dog! So often as I have cautioned him against getting into debt! What might befal him, when I am arrested who do not owe a shilling in the world. Yet, must I not only pay it for him, but I dare not even reproach him with his extravagance, for fear of compromising myself. He'd be the first to laugh at finding me caught in my own trap. (*Clock strikes ten.*) Ten o'clock! I hope Mrs. Waddy will make no mistake. She owes me two hundred pounds, and I have requested her to pay it in Melford's name to ——

Enter FERRET.

Fer. Good news for you, Mr. Melford. Allow me first to snuff your candle. Your creditor, Mr. Fleece, has just desired us to stop proceedings against you; a lady, Mrs. Waddy, having paid him two hundred pounds on your account.

Shat. That's well: and now, Sir, I'll wish you good evening. (*going*)

Fer. Stop, Sir; you can't go. Our client knows nothing yet of your arrest, and there still remains *Thirty-six—fifteen—two,* for interest, costs, and fees.

Shat. (*going*) I'll send you that to-morrow—upon my honour I will.

Fer. I'm an attorney; I have nothing to do with honour, Sir.

Shat. My dear Mr. Ferret, I have reasons for wishing to get out of this place.

Fer. Most people have, Sir; but you can't go till you have paid up.

Shat. Now, harkye—just step home with me—(*Aside*) No, that won't do; I must not let him know 'tis my house, or I shall be discovered.—Just step with me to the house of a friend, who will lend me the money, and—I'll make you a handsome compliment.

Fer. Will you?—But suppose your friend should be out?

Shat. No fear of that; he has a large party at his house. (*sighs*) Besides, I am certain of finding my friend at home—when I get there.

Fer. Well, I must go and speak to my father about it; I never do any thing without consulting the old one.

Shat. (*aside*) Few of your profession do, I believe. Now, be expeditious, for Heaven's sake.

Fer. 'Tis but a step. You may amuse yourself at the grating for a few minutes. You have a glimpse of the tops of the trees in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Charming by moon-light. Ha! ha! ha! Now, be sure you don't go till I return, Sir. [*Exit.*

Shat. A pleasant, facetious young gentleman. A pretty sample of what I must endure, should this affair get wind.

Enter CAPTAIN O'RAPPER.

O'Rap. Sir, I am mighty proud of the honour of seeing you.

Shat. Sir, I—(*aside*) wish the devil had you. The fellow I pushed out of my way as I came in.

O'Rap. Sir, you will not be ignorant of the object of my visit, when I tell you what it is. Sir, I am Captain O'Rapper; I find by the books of the house that you are Mr. Melford.

Shat. (*aside*) I must not deny it.—Yes, Sir; and what then?

O'Rap. Pray be calm, Sir. You may remember, Sir, that when you came into this pleasant retreat, I did myself the honour of welcoming you—for you are a new comer, and I have been meditating here these six weeks—and I conceive, Sir, that you made me a very uncivil return for my politeness.

Shat. Zounds, Sir—but——

O'Rap. Pray be cool, Sir; I am known to be the most peaceable man in the world. When I am insulted, Sir, nobody so easily satisfied as

Captain O'Rapper; and all I require of you on this occasion is a gentlemanly satisfaction.

Shat. But, Sir, if you would only——

O'Rap. Pray be temperate, Sir; there is no need to be angry when one is displeased. You are a gentleman, as I am informed.

Shat. But what the devil, Sir——

O'Rap. Enough said, Sir, in all conscience! I am told you will be at liberty to-morrow, and so shall I; and I trust you will find it quite convenient and agreeable to meet me at the bottom of Primrose Hill, at two o'clock. After so long a confinement, a comfortable shot before dinner will be quite refreshing. Sir, I must now take my leave; for, at this moment, I am down stairs at supper with a friend. O, brute that I am! I have left my visitor all alone; and, upon my veracity, it never once occurred to me to stay and keep him company till I came back again. Sir, your most obedient. [*Exit.*

Shat. Ugh! a mighty pleasant issue there is like to be to my frolic! What had I to do to be jiggeting off with a supposed mistress? Imprisonment is not sufficient, but I must hold up my unfortunate thick head for a cool, firm-nerved, fighting Irishman to pop at. The next thing, I suppose——

Enter a Servant.

Well—what now? More debts? more duels?

Serv. Mr. Ferret has sent to beg you'll not be impatient, Sir, but he can't be with you these two hours.

Shat. What!—two hours longer!—and my company waiting! I shall go wild!—Shew me into a room where I may get a little rest. Had

I been at Kensington, dutifully hum-drumming with my wife, this would not have happened. Oh! let me but get quietly out of this scrape, and I swear to become the most devoted, the most——No, I won't swear—it is to be hoped matters are not so bad as that yet.

[*Exit* SHATTERLY, *followed by a Servant.*

SCENE 2.—*A Drawing-room at* SHATTERLY'S, *splendidly illuminated—Company passing and repassing—Card Tables, &c.—Music heard.*

Enter MELFORD; *followed by* SCAMPER, *with a tray of refreshments.*

Scamp. There is nothing to be uneasy at, Sir; for I dare say your uncle is at his old tricks. After kicking his heels at a coffee-house, he'll come home at an unseasonable hour, and endeavour to get himself suspected by his visitors of an intrigue. The ridiculous old fop.

Mel. Disagreeable as it is, I can't help laughing. I am assailed with reproaches for my uncle's absence, as if I were to blame for it. This comes of doing the honours for him.

Scamp. Yet I'm sure nothing has been wanting to the comfort of his friends. You have kept the trays in motion, that I can say.

Mel. If my uncle were my *locum tenens* now,—if he were doing duty for me, I don't think he'd perform it with half the good will and activity. Now, Scamper, see that the waiters are attentive, send the ices round once more, and then let the supper-room be thrown open. 'Tis past two o'clock.

Enter MR. *and* MRS. CRAMWELL.

Mrs. Cram. (*to Melford.*) Really, Sir, this is the rudest behaviour I ever witnessed. Another ice, young man.

Scamp. (*aside*) The fourteenth!

Cram. (*taking an ice*) Mr. Shatterly ought to be ashamed of himself.

Scam. (*aside*) Eleven!—

Mrs. Cram. 'Tis unpardonable. Pray, Sir, are we to sup to-night?

Mel. The supper-room will be opened immediately, Madam.

Cram. 'Tis vastly ungenteel. (*they each take another ice*) I'll quit the house the moment supper is over, and never enter it again.

[*Exeunt* MR. *and* MRS. CRAMWELL *talking together and eating.*

Scamp. 'Tis so rude of my master, I wonder they don't quit it before. From the moment they entered the room, have they been grumbling at the old gentleman's absence and abusing him; swallowing his ices, cakes, and hot wine all the time. [*Exit* SCAMPER

Enter MR. *and* MRS. BICKERTON *and* FANNY.

Mrs. Bick. I'm astonished at your attempting to defend him, my love!

Bick. His absence cannot be voluntary; and, to a woman of your understanding, my dear—

Mrs. Bick. That a man of your good sense should view his behaviour differently from me!

Bick. But, my dear—

Mrs. Bick. Mr. Bickerton, you talk like a fool. What think you Henry?

Mel. He's my uncle, and it is not for me to say what I think, but—(*to Bickerton*) at near

three in the morning, appearances are confoundedly against him. But come—you had better go down at once to the supper-room, and secure places; this way, you'll avoid the rush. [*All the company rise and exeunt.*

Bick. (giving his hand ceremoniously to Mrs. Bick.) You may laugh, Melford; but I am Goth enough on all occasions to give my arm to my own wife.

Mrs. Bick. Ah, Mr. Bickerton, you are the most gallant husband,—the most—*(he treads upon her train)* Dear me! you are as awkward as a bear. [*Exeunt* MR. *and* MRS. BICKERTON.

Fanny. My sister and her husband are the happiest couple in the world. They never quarrel.

Mel. So I have observed. But—they sometimes disagree? They have little bickerings now and then?

Fan. Bickerings? Oh, twenty times in a day. They'll snap and sputter at each other like dear little cat and dog; but only about trifles. On matters of importance though, they never disagree.

Mel. Now, my dear Fanny, when we marry we will adopt the opposite plan: we'll reserve our quarrels for matters of importance, for such seldom occur; and endeavour to avoid little bickerings about those trifles that each hour brings with it, and that make up the sum of domestic happiness—or misery.

Fan. That's precisely my opinion. But we shall agree as well as most married people, I'm certain; for, I do assure you, Henry, I have not a fault. A little jealous, that I confess.

Mel. Of all faults the most fatal. But you

shall have no cause for its exercise. I am now experienced in life: like most young men of the world, I have been taught wisdom in the school of folly, and I have paid for my education.

Fan. The only debt perhaps you have ever punctually discharged.

Mel. And my affections are—they ever have been—undividedly yours.

Fan. I am too happy in believing you to doubt.

Enter SCAMPER *with a letter, seeing* FANNY, *he conceals it.*

Fan. What letter is that?

Scamp. A letter! Lord Ma'am, I've no letter.

Fan. I saw it. But I understand: you dare not deliver it in my presence. (*going.*)

Mel. Stay, I entreat you. Give me the letter.

Scamp. Here it is, Sir. 'Tis but a little note, I assure you ma'am.

Mel. Then why not give it me at once, Sirrah?

Scamp. (*to him aside*) It was sent here from your lodgings some hours ago. To say the truth, I forgot it till now; and if I had thought you had been engaged with Miss Fanny, I wouldn't—

Fan. Whispering!—So! So!

Scamp. I'll bring you off, Sir. Madam, I assure you, whatever you may think, the letter is not from a lady.

Mel. Confound the blockhead! Give me the letter, and get out of my sight. (*Scamper gives the letter and exit.*) A blundering booby!

Fan. An awkwardly managed business I admit.

Mel. (*looking at it.*) 'Tis nothing that need concern you, believe me. I know the hand. (*aside*) 'Tis from Fleece!

Fan. Indeed, Sir! that's very satisfactory to me.

Mel. Read it and be convinced. (*gives the letter.*)

Fan. Well, since you insist—(*opens it*) Signed "Ephraim Fleece"—

Mel. A man of business—'tis about a little debt. (*aside*) 'Tis better she know that than suspect worse.

Fan. (*reads*) "I have ordered Mr. Ferret to drop proceedings against you"—

Mel. (*surprised*) Indeed!—

Fan. So! Well, Harry, I am glad 'tis nothing else. I was beginning to be alarmed.

Mel. You see 'twas needless. But pray read on. (*aside*) I suppose he calculates he'll gain more by waiting my convenience than by annoying me.

Fanny (reads.) "Drop proceedings against "you—the sum of two hundred pounds having "just been paid me on your account, by your "fair—and kind friend,—Mrs. Waddy!"—So, Sir, this is your undivided affection, is it?

Mel. What is this? I am lost in amazement! (*takes the letter.*)—"Two hundred pounds—fair and kind friend." 'Tis a fiction—a forgery—I protest I know no such person.

Fanny. Thus to deceive me! But I'll hear no more. A lady! and one who is sufficiently interested about you to pay your debts! Fie, Mr. Melford! But I leave you, Sir, and desire that this interview may be our last. [*Exit.*

Mel. But one word.—She's gone! What can this mean? Surely 'tis my creditor's hand.—Ha! I have it. Another scheme of that cursed Ferret to ensnare me. This letter is intended to lull me into security, and render me a more certain prey. My poor, dear Fanny! I'll after her, and explain it all. [*Exit* MELFORD.

Enter SHATTERLY *on tiptoe, pale and haggard.*

Shat. Thanks to the bustle among the servants, I have succeeded in stealing, unobserved, into my own house, like a thief come to rob it. And that insatiable young lawyer! He follows close at my elbow till the last shilling is paid him, like a vampyre thirsting for the last drop of my blood.

Enter FERRET.

Fer. (*putting his head forward and in a whisper.*) Well, Sir, the *Thirty-six-fifteen-two?*

Shat. Ha! here he is again! He's like the ghost of Bill Jones, in the story—turn where I will I see him. My friend is at home now, and I'll get the amount for you.

Fer. I need not remind you, Sir, of the little compliment you promised me for my extraordinary trouble in getting you out to-night.

Shat. And for your extraordinary dexterity in getting me in yesterday. Wait here an instant, Sir, and you shall be satisfied. (*He looks cautiously about, and strides off.*)

Fer. On the whole, this Mr. Melford is a liberal sort of fellow; really it does one's heart good to arrest such a man.

Enter MELFORD, *eating an ice, and speaking off.*

Mel. Scamper! more warm negus to the

dancing-room.—(*seeing Ferret*). Ha! I have not observed this gentleman before. Allow me, Sir, to offer you an ice.

Fer. (*rather confused.*) I'd rather not take any, thank you, Sir.

Mel. You had better; it is excessively warm here.

Fer. (*aside.*) An ice is no bad thing; I may as well—(*takes one from a servant who crosses*—Thank ye, Sir.

Mel. I hope you have supped well, Sir, though the room was rather crowded.

Fer. Why, as to supper, Sir, I never take any thing but a welsh-rabbit, and to-night I have been so busy that I have not supped at all.

Mel. Where there are pretty women to chat with, one is, as you say, too busy to think of supper.

Fer. You mistake me, Sir; mine has been more fatiguing work than chatting with pretty women. I've been upon my legs all night.

Mel. Oh, then, you've been down stairs, dancing.

Fer. No, no, I didn't come here to dance. Ha! ha! ha! I have been making some one else dance, though.

Mel. (*aside.*) Confound it! am I talking to a fiddler?—Are not you a friend of Mr. Shatterly's, Sir?

Fer. Shatterly! Shatterly! I have not the honour of his acquaintance.

Mel. (*aside.*) 'Tis so, and be hanged to him! So then you are one of the—(*makes a sign of fiddling*)—fiddling gentlemen?

Fer. Zounds, Sir! do I look like a fiddler?

Sir, I am an attorney at law; I am Mr. Simon Ferret, son of Mr. Judas Ferret.

Mel. (*trembling.*) Fe—Ferret! Are you Mr. Ferret?

Fer. I am, Sir, and I didn't come here either to dance or to fiddle. I have a little business with a Mr. Melford.

Mel. (*lets his glass fall.*) You—you are mistaken— Mr. Melford does not live here.

Fer. I know that: he lives in Leicester Square: but he's here with his friend, and I'm waiting for him.

Mel. I—I beg pardon—for leaving you,—but— I've promised a lady for the next dance and—(*aside*) Oh, the persecuting scoundrel! to follow me here! 'Tis well he doesn't know me. *(runs off)*

Fer. Why, what ails the gentleman! Oh! he's in some such scrape himself, I suppose; and the very sight of an attorney or a bailiff, operates upon a gentleman in difficulties like a fit of the ague. Well, Sir, have you got the *thirty-six—fifteen—two*?

Enter SHATTERLY.

Shat. Here, Sir!—quick!—here is a forty-pound note; the difference is a compliment for your—kindness and attention.

Fer. Don't mention it, Mr. Melford, it has been a pleasure to me. Here is your note of hand receipted, and a receipt in full for the costs.

Shat. (*snatches them, thrusts them into his pocket, and looks about him with alarm.*) Be cautious! (*aside*) Thank heaven that's over! Though I have made a fool of myself, my name is not compromised, so no one will be the wiser

for it. Now, Sir, let me shew you out this way, and you will escape observation.

Fer. I hope you are satisfied with my conduct, Sir; and on any future occasion, I shall be most happy to—

Shat. No ceremony, Sir: your conduct, your engaging manners altogether on this occasion, have made such an impression upon me, that I most sincerely hope—

Fer. (*Bows*) Sir!

Shat. I may never have the misfortune of beholding that damnable taking countenance of yours again. This way, Sir,

[*Exeunt* SHATTERLY *and* FERRET.

Enter MR. *and* MRS. BICKERTON *and* FANNY.

Bick. (*to Fanny.*) Be pacified; I dare say Melford will be able to explain this to our satisfaction.

Mrs. Bick. Pacified indeed! how you talk, my dear! Has she not seen the very letter in which the woman is named.

Bick. (*angrily*) But why not argue the matter temperately, Mrs. Bickerton? I can't bear to see any one in a passion.

Fan. He has endeavoured to speak to me, but I will never listen to him again, I'm determined. Pray let us begone.

Bick. Now leave this to me. I am persuaded there is some mistake. We will send for him, and, late as it is, he shall accompany us home, and justify himself at once, if he can.—But, as I live, here comes Shatterly.

Enter SHATTERLY, (*he draws back at seeing them.*)

Come forward, Sir; come into the court. Now, what have you to say in your defence?

Shat. I'll put a good face on the matter: any thing will be better than the truth. (*Looks significantly at Bickerton and then turns to the ladies,*) Ladies, appearances are somewhat against me, I admit; but if you imagine—

Mrs. Bick. (*coldly.*) Spare yourself the trouble of an explanation, Sir.—Mr. Bickerton, have you ordered the carriage?

Bick. (*to Shatterly.*) Seriously, this is too bad.

Shat. Well, ladies, I throw myself on your mercy: (*affectedly,*) I am a sad young dog, that's the truth on't: pardon me but this offence, and—

Mrs. Bick. Your friends are all determined to make you pay dearly for this rudeness.

Shat. (*aside.*) I've paid pretty well already.

Fanny. How pale he looks! have you been ill, Sir?

Shat. (*aside.*) The best excuse in the world. —Well, I had better tell you the truth: that is it. Soon after I quitted you yesterday afternoon, I was suddenly seized in the street with a—a sort of a—

Mrs. Bick. (*to Bick.*) He's inventing this. A vertigo, I suppose! But I hope you are quite yourself again?

Shat. Yes, Ma'am, I am myself again, though I was quite a different person for many hours.

Bick. (*Ironically.*) You have been taken care of, I hope?

Shat. The greatest: I have been watched with the most tender solicitude: The good folks of the house where I was carried, could not have been more anxious for my safety—if two hundred and forty pounds had depended on it.

Mrs. Bick. Poor soul! and had you no professional assistance?

Shat. Yes, Ma'am, a lawyer, who—

Mrs. Bick. A what!

Shat. I mean a Doctor—

Bick. Who bled you, eh?

Shat. Yes, he did bleed me, and pretty freely too. Indeed, but for that operation, I should not have been home yet. But where is my Nephew? Have you seen him here to-night?

Bick. Here! why he has been the very soul of the party. You are under great obligations to him—he has most ably supplied your place.

Shat. (*aside*) And I have acquitted myself tolerably well in his. One good turn—— Well, Melford is a fine young fellow—an excellent young fellow; but——

Fan. But what?

Shat. He is my nephew—you are my friends; and as his marriage into your family has been contemplated, it is my duty to tell you——

Fan. Pray, Sir, explain at once.

Shat. It will astonish you to hear it: he is in debt.

Bick. Is that all? Like a man of honour he has told me that himself. But how came you to know it?—you, from whom he is so anxious to conceal it?

Shat. Oh—— I happened to fall in the way of the intelligence.

Bick. I'm his confidant in the business, and know much more about it than you do. (*takes him aside*) Yesterday a writ was issued against him.

Shat. I happen to know that too. But I'll punish him for his imprudence: He shall never have another shilling from me, and——

Bick. Pooh! pooh! 'tis a trifle; to-morrow I'll offer my security for him.

Shat. (aside) I wish he had done so yesterday.—No matter, he has disobeyed my strict injunction, and I'll never forgive him.

Mrs. Bick. Hold, Sir; consider, you yourself are an offender; you have your forgiveness to seek from us.

Shat. To-morrow morning, then——

Mrs. Bick. (*pointedly*) We invite you, so you may be sure of finding us at home.

Bick. He'll certainly come, unless his vertigo should return. Well, good night. But where is Melford?

Fan. No matter. I will not see him.

Bick. You shall, you shall. We will have an explanation from him at once. (*To a servant who crosses*) Go, look for Mr. Melford, and tell him two ladies are waiting for him in a carriage. [*Exit Servant.*

Mrs. Bick. You'll remember.

Shat. I sha'n't forget.

[*Exeunt Mr. and Mrs. Bick. and Fanny.*

Shat. Vastly agreeable! So, for no fault of my own, I suppose I shall be compelled to explain and apologise all round; to run the gauntlet through the whole party, and receive a lash of sarcasm and reproach from each as I pass.

Enter Mr. *and* Mrs. Cramwell, *each with a Sandwich.*

Mrs. Cram. So, Sir! here you are at last! Unpardonable rudeness! None but a good-natured fool like myself would have condescended to stay supper.

Shat. That was very kind of you, madam; but, indeed——

Mr. Cram. It would have served you right had we all gone away without eating a morsel.

Mrs. Cram. (interrupting Shatterly, who is about to speak) Don't attempt to excuse yourself: you have behaved like a barbarian.

Mr. Cram. A negro!

Mrs. Cram. A Hottentot!—Young man, call up No. 227. [*Exit* Mr. *and* Mrs. Cramwell.

Enter Melford.

Mel. I have watch'd Ferret out of the house, but I'll answer for it he is waiting for me close at hand. *(seeing Shatterly)* What! returned! My dear uncle, I will not say any thing to wound your feelings—it is not for me to reprove you: why you have absented yourself—where, or how you have pass'd the night, is your business, not mine.

Shat. A-hem!

Mel. But this I must say——

Shat. Confusion!—and he, too, of all people! —Let me tell you, Sir, that you alone are to blame for——*(checking himself)* You are to blame to accuse me, till you know something of the cause.

Enter Servant.

Serv. (to Melford) I have been looking for you, Sir; I am desired to say that two ladies are waiting for you in a carriage.

Mel. (alarmed) Two ladies! 'Tis that rascal Ferret. 'Twas for this, then, he came here. How shall I escape?—My dear uncle, I must ——No, I dare not confess it to him.

Shat. Why, what's the matter with him?

Mel. (to the Servant) Who sent you with the message?

Serv. A gentleman of the company, Sir.

Mel. Aye, one who just left the house? Charming company! What am I to do? Ha, I have it. I'll escape the rogue yet. (*He tears a leaf from his pocket book, and writes; during which time* SCAMPER *enters and extinguishes the lights.*) "You are a couple of charming "creatures, and a corner in a carriage at five "in the morning is a tempting offer; but since "I am apprised of your tricks and schemes, "you will not be astonished at my determi- "nation to enjoy my liberty a little longer." Ha! ha! ha! There, give this to the ladies—with Mr. Melford's compliments. [*Exit Servant.*] Now, while Ferret and his *ladies* are waiting for me at the front of the house, I'll make my escape at the back. (*going*)

Shat. Stop, Sir.—(*Aside*) No, the explanation will be too long at this time.—Meet me to-morrow early, at Bickerton's; I have something most important to say to you.

Mel. I'll join you there at breakfast. For the present, my dear uncle, adieu.

[*Exit* MELFORD.

Shat. (*looking after him*) That young man will come to an untimely end.—Well, 'tis useless to think more of it now.—Harassed, weary, famished! I've not tasted any thing since yesterday at breakfast.—Scamper! Scamper!

Scamp. (comes forward) Bless me, Sir! why where have you been?

Shat. What's that to you? Never mind.—Am I to hear a lecture from him too?—Is the company all gone?

Scamp. Yes, Sir.

Shat. Then give me a mouthful of supper, and I'll go to bed.

Scamp. Dear me, Sir, I'm very sorry, but there is not a morsel of any thing in the house.

Shat. What! wasn't a supper sent in for forty, at half-a-guinea a head?

Scamp. Yes, Sir; but after the company had done, the fiddlers and servants set to, and, as usual, they have left a clear pantry; there is not so much as the leg of a fowl remaining.

Shat. Then give me a glass of wine, and a crust of bread and cheese.

Scamp. Dear me, Sir, I'm very sorry, but your nephew, who did the honors in your absence, ordered all the wine that remained to be made into negus—and all the negus is gone.

Shat. So, then, I'm to be starved to death in my own house, where threescore people have been feasting at my expence. I sha'n't live to be shot in a duel with Captain O'Rapper to-morrow. This has been an agreeable night on the whole. Scamper, give me a light, and let me go to bed.

Scamp. Dear me, Sir, I'm very sorry——

Shat. What's the matter now?

Scamp. Your nephew ordered your bed to be taken down, to make room for the whist-tables, and——

Shat. Get out of my sight; and if my nephew has left two chairs and a table in my house, put them together, that I may rest my weary limbs upon them. [*Exeunt.*

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE 1.—*A room at* BICKERTON'S.—MR. *and* MRS. BICKERTON, *and* MRS. SHATTERLY, *discovered at breakfast.*

Mrs. Bick. My dear Mrs. Shatterly, be pacified!

Mrs. Shat. Pacified!—Is it to be borne? While my husband, the profligate, is revelling, and squandering his money on his own idle pleasures; while half the town are feasting and dancing in my house,—mine!—is it to be borne, that I, his wife, his lawful wedded wife—?

Mrs. B. But be calm, my dear Madam.

Mrs. Shat. Calm, indeed! fiddle-de-dee! suppose it your own case, Mrs. Bickerton. The old, hard-hearted, cruel, monster!—But I'll bear it no longer. I have relations—military relations! with two militia captains in my family, let Mr. Shatterly look to it.

Bick. Pardon me, my dear Mrs. Shatterly; but I am always for gentle measures. Besides, Mr. Shatterly says—not that ever I interfere between man and wife—but Mr. Shatterly does say that in providing for you a country retreat, he has merely complied with your own taste.

Mrs. Shat. A country retreat, indeed! a smoky back parlour at Kensington, a country retreat! While he is enjoying all the amusements of the town, there am I, from week's-end to week s-end, squatted down to penny whist: except, indeed, when I take my poor poodle an airing in the gardens.

Mrs. B. Patience, my dear, patience: for after all—though I never meddle in family disputes—I do think that with so liberal a maintenance as Mr. Shatterly allows you—

Mrs. Shat. Liberal!—they'll drive me mad! (*rises and comes forward,*) This comes of appealing to one's friends! Liberal! a paltry two hundred a year! and even that I am obliged to dun him for. But no wonder he cannot find money for his poor, lone, lawful wife, when he lavishes on a single entertainment more than—

Mrs. Bick. If you allude to last night indeed —though heaven forbid I should say anything to make you uneasy—but such profusion! as I said to Mr. B. it is to be hoped he can afford it.

Bick. Ah!—well!—end how it may, we, as his friends, grieved to witness such extravagance.

Mrs. Shat. (*aside.*) Their grief did not spoil their supper, I'll be bound for it. But no matter:—the world shall be informed of his conduct.

Bick. No rash resolution: hope rather for a reconciliation; and, in case of such an event, pray let me advise you—not that I believe half that the world says—

Mrs. Shat The world says? and of me?

Mrs. B. Pshaw!—a trifle!—besides, we are the last to listen to such reports. Ah!—(*taking Bickerton's hand.*) temper, temper is the secret of preserving a good understanding between man and wife.

Mrs Shat. Well, Ma'am!

Mrs. Bick. In short, my dear, people do say—not that ever I repeat ill-natured stories—that your temper was the original cause—

Mrs. Shat. My temper!

Bick. My love, you are wrong: what I alluded to was merely what certain persons hinted respecting Mrs. Shatterly's habits of expence.

Mrs. Shat. Expence!

Mrs. Bick. That's right, Sir, contradict me. I insist 'twas her temper they complained of.

Bick. My love, 'twas her extravagance.

Mrs. Bick. 'Twas her temper, Sir.

Bick. Her extravagance, Madam, and I protest I am right.

Mrs. Shat. And I protest you are both in the wrong; and surely I ought to know best (*Bick. and Mrs. Bick. walk up the stage.*) But this comes of going about seeking advice and consolation. The most mortifying consequence of one's mishaps is this affected sympathy of certain "*best friends.*" 'Tis, after all, but a sly, pettifogging, cowardly, compound of slander and vanity: For while, as your friends, they *lament* you into the possession of every failing under heaven, they artfully imply the existence of every opposite virtue in themselves.

Bick. There, my dear, there's an end of it. (*coming forward.*)

Mrs. Shat. As to my extravagance I'll say nothing: as to temper, if I do not profit by your precepts, your example, I trust, will not be lost upon me. But I'll go to Mr. Shatterly instantly; I'll bring him to his senses, I will. I'll turn over a new leaf. I'll give routs, I'll give balls, suppers, and masquerades; and if he is to be ruined by extravagance, it is but decent and proper that his lawful, wedded wife, should share in the pleasure. So good morning, my dear friends.

[*Exit* MRS. SHATTERLY.

Mrs. B. Poor thing! one must say something civil in these cases: but there are faults on both sides, I dare say.

Bick. Temper! temper! temper! And now, dear, I have a request—

Mrs. B. A command, you mean! I am a poor submissive fool, so, be it what it may, except to receive Mr. Melford—

Bick. And that is precisely what I meant to ask.

Mrs. B. As to that, my love—never. Even presuming that he can give a satisfactory explanation about that Mrs. Waddy, what can excuse his insolent note to us last night.—"Tricks and schemes?" indeed!

Bick. But, in justice to him, let us hear—

Mrs. B. Pray say no more, Mr. Bickerton; no wonder my poor sister is too ill to join us at breakfast this morning. To be so insulted—

Bick. I have done, my love; yet I must say—

Mrs. B. Harkye, Mr. Bickerton; you know I never contradict you in matters of importance; but if you will not order the servants to deny us to Mr. Melford, why I must.

Bick. Madam, there must be but one master in a family, and therefore—

Mrs. B. Well, Sir!—

Bick. The order must proceed from me, my love. [*Exit.*

Mrs. B. You may enjoy the honour of the executive, my love; but the power of legislation shall be mine, or—I'm no woman. [*Exit.*

SCENE 2.—*A Room at* SHATTERLY'S.

Enter SHATTERLY.

Shat. I haven't closed my eyes all night.

Scheming, planning, and plotting, but all to no purpose. I cannot, for the soul of me, devise any plausible reason for my rascally nephew, why I should suddenly have taken it into my head to pay a debt for him, when I have so often vowed—yet, know it he must. Shall I tell him the truth? A pretty story it would make, truly! "Your uncle must needs be "frisky and frolicksome, my dear nephew; he "assumes your name, determined to whisk "away your mistress; the blushing beauty "turns out to be a strapping bailiff; your "young scape-grace of an uncle is arrested in "your stead, clapt into a spunging-house in "your stead, compelled to pay—" The merciless dog would make me the town jest. Then I have a duel on my hands: but that's a trifle in comparison. I am not bullet-proof; yet have I such a dread of ridicule, that, upon my soul, I'd rather be shot at than laughed at. Ah, me! if I survive the difficulties and dangers of this day I'll turn hermit—I'll reform—I will, though half the fine women in town cry their eyes out for me.

Enter a Boy in livery.

Boy. A letter from my mistress, Sir.

Shat. (*smirking.*) Another letter from Julia. Reform, indeed? 'Gad, if they will persecute me in this way—(*reads.*) "Beloved,—no answer to my application of yesterday—fearful you are unwell." Poor, fond fool!—"Will call "upon you in the course of the morning."—A decided conquest: but 'tis resolved, and she shall be the first victim (*puts the letter leisurely into his pocket, and hums a tune*)—My compliments—(*aside*)—that's bitter cold—I'll write to-

morrow, or next day, or in a week perhaps.—(*Exit Boy.*) Poor devil! I pity her from the bottom of my soul. Breaking women's hearts is barbarous work at the best—(*a loud knocking*)—Ah! 'tis she, perhaps! But I have no time to spare, so I'll out this way and avoid her.

[*Exit* SHATTERLY.

Enter Mrs. SHATTERLY, *followed by* SCAMP.

Mrs. Shat. Out, indeed! and at this early hour! I'll not believe it.

Scamp. Madam, I do assure you he is (*aside.*) What brings her here?

Mrs. Shat. Harkye, Mr. Scamper! I believe you to be my husband's aider and abettor, his counsellor in his wicked proceedings.

Scamp. His counsellor, indeed, Madam, but only to his duty. I endeavour to guide his young and tottering steps in the paths of virtue.

Mrs. Shat. Young! Aye, there it is! His ridiculous affectation of youth, that most contemptible of all follies, is the main spring of his misconduct. But he can't deceive me; no one knows better than I do what an old fellow he is.

Scamp. But may I enquire, Madam, why you, who have not been in this house these two years—

Mrs. Shat. No doubt my visit surprises you, as it will your worthy master. But he disregards my letters, he has neglected to send me my last year's allowance, and—

Scamp. Oh! I perceive: you want some money ma'am! (*aside*) His very wife too wants money of him!

Mrs. Shat. And have it I will; so if, as you

say, he is not at home, you, who are Mr. Shatterly's right hand, must—

Scamp. Whichever hand I may have the honour of being to him, I assure you, Ma'am, I am not the hand he puts into his pocket.

Mrs. Shat. I see how it is. Like Master—

Scamp But had you not better write to him once again.

Mrs. Shat. No. (*takes a chair*) I'll not quit this house till I have seen him.

Scamp. O lord!—Excuse me Madam: I think you had better not wait here. My master you must know, lives a sort of bachelor's life, and it might happen—I merely say it might so happen that—unpleasant visitors—

Mrs. Shat. (*starting up*) Lord bless me! I should faint at the very sight of such a thing. Let me out, Mr. Scamper, let me out. O the monster! (*walks about*) But, no; on second thoughts here I'll remain. Go, seek him.—You know his haunts, I dare say. Tell him I am here, and let him tremble.

Scamp. I'll endeavour to find him; and, if I succeed, what am I to say, Ma'am?

Mrs. Shat. Say—that he's a wretch!

Scamp. Sir, you are a wretch!

Mrs. Shat. A monster! (*at each phrase Scamper bows assent*) that I'll tear his eyes out; that I hate, loathe, and despise him.

Scamp. And despises you. Now upon my life that is very fine—the true sublime; but it won't do. With submission, Ma'am, I think that something more to the point would please my master better. You want money. How much?

Mrs. Shat. Two hundred pounds

Scamp. Two hund—His own wife too! Well, Ma'am, I'll tell him.

Mrs. Shat. Two hundred! And let him dare send me a guinea less. I'll wait your return in the library.

Scamp. (aside) What will he say? The real Mrs. S. asking for two hundred pounds.

Mrs. Shat. The unfeeling wretch! So good a wife; so faithful, kind, and gentle a wife;—but I'll expose him all over town; I'll break his heart yet; I will, though it be made of adamant. [*Exit.*

Scamp. Gentle soul! When such are a wife's temptations, what husband would hesitate to return to his duty. This way, Ma'am. [*Exit.*

SCENE 3.—*Before Bickerton's House.*

Enter SHATTERLY.

Shat. My nephew not at home. See him I must, to prevent the affair getting wind. He's at Bickerton's perhaps. (*goes towards the door*) But here comes Scamper. What can he want?

Enter SCAMPER.

Scamp Ha! 'tis lucky I have found you, Sir.

Shat. Why, what's the matter?

Scamp. (aside) How shall I break it to him? He's in a plaguy ill-humour, and this unexpected visit of his wife's won't improve it.

Shat. Well, what do you stand gaping there for? Why don't you speak?

Scamp. I have a surprise for you, Sir.

Shat. Ha! I have lived in a surprise since yesterday. Well?

Scamp. There's an unexpected visitor at home.

Shat. Who? Who?

Scamp. A lady, Sir.

Shat. 'Twas she then!—I heard her knock, so went out to avoid her.

Scamp. Indeed! Now really, Sir, if I may take the liberty to say so, you are not behaving well to her.

Shat. She complains of my neglect and indifference I suppose.

Scamp. Bitterly! and then, Sir, her last year's allowance.

Shat. What! an allowance! from me! The impudent baggage

Scamp. Oh fie, Sir, don't call names.

Shat. Pretend to an allowance! Why I don't allow her threepence a week. This determines me. I'll cut the connexion altogether.

Scamp. (aside) Now upon my life he's growing too bad. Allow me, Sir: she's in a furious passion, and threatens to expose you all over town. Now, to prevent scandal, follow my advice: send her the two hundred pounds she desires, and —

Shat. Two hundred!

Scamp. (aside) I knew how it would be. Aye, Sir, two hundred is the word, and she won't be satisfied with a guinea less.

Shat. Well, egad this is—(*walks about*) Two hund—Paying a milliner's bill, or so, is very well; but two hundred in a lump! (*takes out his pocket-book and gives Scamper a note*) Here Scamper, I must cut; I must cut, Scamper. Here, give her ten pounds; send the saucy

jade about her business, and let me hear no more of her.

Scamp. Lord Sir! pray Sir, consider; she vows she'll go about to all your friends, and—

Shat. Tell her she may go to the devil. Begone! I see my nephew coming, and have business with him.

Scamp Well Sir, I—poor Mrs. Shatterly! I feared how it would be.

Enter MELFORD.

This is no time to speak to him about money.

Mel. Luckily, I do not need. Bickerton will arrange with Ferret this morning, so I'm out of danger.

Scamp. His poor wife too! Ten pounds, and a message that would cut through a mill-stone. (*Shatterly signs*) I'm gone, Sir.

[*Exit* SCAMPER.

Mel. Well, Sir, at parting last night, you desired an interview.

Shat. (*endeavouring to assume an air of composure*) Harry—Melford—I—(*aside*) May I be hang'd if I know how to tell him.

Mel. (*aside*) What is he driving at?

Shat. Harry—you—you are in debt—no denial—I—I happen to know it.

Mel. (*aside*) 'Tis discovered, and I am ruined. Well, Sir, I confess it. But how came you to make the discovery?

Shat. (*aside*) Ha! Now what tale shall I invent?—Why—but that is not to the point. You are in debt.

Mel. I suspected you knew it, when I saw young Ferret at your house last night.

Shat. You saw him! *(aside)* Am I exposed then? Pshaw! you mistook! It could not be.

Mel. I am positive of it.

Shat. Did you—did you speak to him?

Mel. We had a long chat; we sipped an ice together; but luckily he didn't know me.

Shat. (affecting a laugh) Very comical! Did he tell you any thing?

Mel. Yes. (*Shatterly agitated*) He told me he was waiting there for Mr. Melford—meaning me.

Shat. Was that all?

Mel. All! Egad, I thought it quite enough, so away I ran.

Shat. (*aside*) All's safe! He knows nothing. Ha! I have it. I'll make a merit of necessity, and gain the credit of having done a generous action. Harry, you know I have often cautioned you against getting into debt.

Mel. (*aside*) Now for it.

Shat. I am greatly annoyed at it; cruelly annoyed—if you knew all; but promise me that you will so offend no more, and I'll settle this matter for you.

Mel. You, Sir! Here's a change!

Shat. Principal, interest, and costs.

Mel. My dear uncle—this unexpected kindness—this spontaneous act of generosity—

Shat. Spontaneous, fiddle sticks—Spontaneous! But on this condition Harry: that you ask no questions, and see no more of Mr. Ferret, but leave all to me.

Mel. Well, Sir, of course I shall not refuse your bounty, but as my friend Bickerton has undertaken to see Mr. Ferret this morning—

Shat. Bickerton! Not for the world. (*aside*) All would come to light. No, I'll not allow any one to interfere. I'm not the boy to do

things by halves. I'm determined to keep all the pleasure of this business to myself.

Mel. Well, Sir, since you insist—

Shat. Peremptorily! And now, Harry, do you owe any thing more?

Mel. Not a shilling, Sir.

Shat. Because, I'd rather you'd tell me than leave the discovery to me again. I'd sooner pay all for you than—

Mel. Indeed, Sir, this is the last.

Shat. That's well, and pray, pray never get into debt again (*aside.*) There; discovery is now impossible.

Mel. (*taking Shatterly's hand.*) Uncle, you are an excellent old--an excellent fellow. But was it kind to threaten, as you did yesterday, to supplant your nephew in the favour of his mistress?

Shat. Pshaw! That was in jest. Besides since yesterday I have had leisure for reflection: and you might have as many mistresses as the Great Mogul, yet the devil a one of them would I ever elope with. (*looks at his watch aside*) It is time to think of my friend O'Rapper. How I shall get over that!—Well, Harry, I'll away at once.

Mel. So you are determined my friend Bickerton shall not interfere.

Shat. Poz; so set your mind at ease. When Shatterly undertakes to serve another young fellow in this way, (*slyly draws a paper from his pocket.*) 'tis as if he already had a receipt in full in his pocket. [*Exit.*

Mel. With all his follies, he is a kind old fellow, and by doubting his generosity I have wronged him. Notwithstanding his abhorrence of debt, the instant he discovers I am in diffi-

culties, he volunteers his assistance. So disinterestedly, so delicately too! Now to my dear Fanny. Doubtless she is as impatient for an interview as I am. (*knocks.*) A word will dispel her apprehensions respecting that Mrs. Waddy, and, being at length a free man, I will, at once, constitute myself her slave for ever.

[*Exit.*

SCENE 4.—*A room at* BICKERTON'S.

Enter MR. *and* MRS. BICKERTON, *and* FANNY, *followed by a servant.*

Mrs Bick. Mr. Melford indeed! we are not at home.

Bick. My love, wouldn't it be better—not that you are wrong—but—

Mrs. Bick. I understand, Sir; you are master in your own house, but in this I must be peremptory.

Fanny. My Sister is right. Yet—I should like to hear what excuse he will find for his impertinence. Ha! ha! ha! Not that it concerns me, for I have done with him for ever, and shall treat him with perfect indifference. Ha! he's here!

[*Exit servant.*

Enter MELFORD.

Mel. (*gaily.*) My dear Fanny—Mrs. Bickerton—

Mrs. Bick. I am astonished at your assurance, Sir.

Fanny. I cannot look at him.

Bick. After what has occurred, Sir—

Mel. What means this!—this is a reception—

Fan. You must have expected, Sir.

Mel. And do you still credit that ridiculous tale about a Mrs. Waddy, after the explanation I—

Fan. It is not that, Sir; our tricks—our tricks and schemes—

Mrs Bick. (*to Melford who appears lost in wonder*) Are you acquainted with this writing, Sir?

Mel. 'Tis mine!

Mrs. Bick. Matchless impudence! Then you confess—

Mel. That I wrote it, certainly. But how comes it that you—Ha! Tell me one thing? Did you send to offer me a seat in your carriage last night?

Bick. Yes.

Mel. My dear Bickerton—Fanny—confound it, what a blunder! And yet—ha! ha! ha!—That rascal Ferret. My head running on the scheme I told you of, I fancied the message was from him, sent this answer to it, and made my escape.

Fan. And is this true, Harry?

Mrs. Bick. So, so! there's your "perfect indifference," my little sister.

Mel. Could you believe me capable—?

Fanny. But, Harry—that lady—that Mrs. Waddy—

Mel. Pshaw! my friend Bickerton knows 'twas all a trick; and here again—(*shews a letter.*) Yesterday 'twas an affair of gallantry, now 'tis an affair of honour.

Fanny. Heavens! A challenge!—

Bick. But this is a serious business!

Mel. Very serious. Don't you see through it?—One captain O'Rapper, a man I never saw in my life, writes to request I will wait on him at Mr. Holdfasts' in Carey Street, that he may

explain why he cannot meet me at Primrose Hill, this morning, as agreed. But this snare of Master Ferret's is too palpable.

Bick. Ha! ha! ha!—Well, I have put an end to his scheming: finding I can advance the sum at once, I have sent for him, and expect him here every minute.

Mel. Thankye! thankye! But my uncle Shatterly has volunteered to settle the business for me. Indeed, I parted with him at your door, on his way to Ferret's.

Bick. Indeed! such liberality! and unsolicited! kind-hearted fellow. Well, you see, we ought not to be hasty in deciding on the characters of men.

Servant enters.

Ser. Mr. Ferret, Sir!

Bick. There, you see Shatterly has not been with him yet. (*gives notes*) Take this, and satisfy him at once. No objection—I insist. Shatterly may arrange with me instead.

Mel. But his injunctions that no one should interfere—

Bick. What can that signify? Bid Mr. Ferret walk up, [*Exit Servant.*

Mel. Aye bid him walk up. I long to look this man of terrors in the face. Yesterday, the very sight of him would have endued me with speed to out-run the Antelope; the very sound of his name—Pshaw! I did it wrong; 'tis a very pretty name: Ferret, Ferret, Ferret, Ferret: a very genteel name, a very harmless name, a very—

Enter FERRET.

Ha! my mighty little engine of the law! I

dare say you won't believe me; but you are of all others, the man I wish to see.

Fer. (*bows.*) Sir:—The gentleman who so politely offered me an ice last night!—I hope you are recovered, Sir.

Mel. Quite out of danger (*shewing notes*) and here's my remedy.

Fer. Eh! beg pardon, Sir, I'm in haste. A Mr. Bickerton wished to see me: are you the gentleman?

Mel. Am I?—Ah, you are a sly, jesting rogue. These (*shewing notes*) a week ago, would have spared your inventive genius a world of exercise (*Ferret looks amazed.*) And how is Captain O'Rapper?

Fer. Captain O'—— (*aside.*) This young man is *non. com.*

Mel. A desperate dog, eh? Primrose Hill! Ten paces. Pop.

Fer. Pop?—Now what can he mean by pop! But to business, gentlemen! Marriage articles? Articles of separation? Last will and testament? I shall be happy in any way to—

Mel. Here! give me a receipt in full, and present my compliments to Captain O'Rapper.

Fer. Receipt in full! On whose account, Sir?

Mel. Of a dear friend of mine—Mr. Melford.

Fer. In the case of Fleece *versus* Melford?—That's settled, Sir.

Bick. So, Shatterly has lost no time. By a gentleman this morning?

Fer. No, Sir, by a lady, last night.

Mrs. Bick. Last night!

Fanny. And the lady's name?

Fer. Mistress—Mrs.—

Fanny. Mrs. Waddy.

Fer. That's the name, Ma'am.

Fanny (*going to her sister.*) Alas! then 'tis but too true.

Bick. Hitherto, Sir, I have defended you; but with such proofs—

Mel. Proof! 'Tis an invention—a calumny—I see: this fellow has been set on—by some rival perhaps. Harkye, rascal, (*seizing him*) disclose the name of your vile employer, or, by heaven, your first step back towards Chancery-lane shall be out at that window.

Fer. Are the folks all crazy here! Help! breach of the peace! assault and battery!

Bick. No violence! one word will suffice. Would you relinquish your pursuit of Mr. Melford, were you not certain that—

Fer. Sir, my name is Ferret, my father's a Ferret, and—

Mel. No trifling, Sir, (*to Bick.*) I'll soon convince you that this tale about a Mrs. Waddy is a fiction, and that the debt is not discharged (*takes his hat.*) Here, Sir, I am your prisoner! Away with me.

Fer. Very sorry I can't oblige you, Sir, but having no authority, an action would lie under the—

Mel. You won't!—We'll see that (*seizes him by the collar.*) If I let you stir till you arrest me—come along, Sir—no resistance—

Fer. But, Sir—Sir—who are you that—

Bick. 'Tis Mr. Melford!

Fer. Of Leicester-square, in the county of Middlesex, portrait painter?

Mel. The same!

Fer. Excuse me there! But I had the pleasure of seeing the gentleman you mention arrested yesterday afternoon.

Bick. How! where?

Fer. In his own painting-room, Ha! ha! ha! A little scheme of mine. He swallowed the bait like a gudgeon.—"There's a lady waiting for you."—"For me."—"Yes, if your name is Melford."—"I'm your man." Off we went and—Ha! ha! ha! He was for denying his name when he discovered the trick; but that wouldn't do.

Mel. Well, Sir, well?

Fer. Well, Sir—there the joke ended. Being locked up, a Mrs. Waddy furnished him with a part of the sum, and a friend, to whose house I accompanied him, with the remainder. It was there I had the honour of meeting you, Sir (*to Melford.*)

Bick. Can you describe the gentleman?

Fer. Why, it was rather an elderly looking young man, tall, stiff, and meagre, with a sort of rusty agility in his gait, and a countenance like parchment steep't in vinegar—crumpled and sour.

Mel. 'Twas he then, 'twas he! You remember his threat yesterday!—Fairly caught, Ha! ha! ha!

Bick. Poor Shatterly! fairly caught, indeed!

Mel. Yet one word—the challenge—

Fer. A challenge (*hastily.*) I know nothing of that; that is not at all in my way, I assure you; besides, I know the law. And now, Sir, if that was your only business with me—

Bick. Sir, I am sorry I have given you this needless trouble.

Mel. As to my impetuosity, Sir—

Fer. A trifle, Sir—a trifle. I am almost sorry he didn't give me a licking; I should have carried damages—one way at least—Ha! ha! ha!—ladies—gentlemen (*bows.*) Some

other time, Sir, it will give me great pleasure. Your most obedient— [*As* FERRET *is going off, enter* SHATTERLY *who, meeting him full butt, walks hastily up the Stage.* FERRET *signs to the rest, and exit.*

Bick. Oh, oh! there is no longer a doubt. So here is his disinterested liberality accounted for.

Mel. The sly old rogue! (*as if suddenly bethinking himself.*) But this challenge. I see it all. While discharging one debt in my name he has contracted another. I'll be quits with him, and settle that myself.

Mrs. B. Melford! where are you going?

Fanny. Harry—

Mel. No matter! I'll soon return.—(*Kisses Fanny's hand and rushes off.*)

Shat. (*about to follow.*) Here Melford—Harry, my boy—Here!—

Bick. (*detaining him.*) What, Shatterly, no apology to the ladies, for your last night's rudeness.

Mrs. B. Come, come, I dare say his absence was involuntary.

Shat. Quite, you may believe me.

Bick. He was constrained by circumstances.

Fan. Not altogether a free agent.

Bick. And in such a case one is like a prisoner.

Shat. Wonderfully like indeed! (*aside*) I suspect—they suspect.

Mrs. Bick. But we have heard of your liberality to your nephew.

Bick. A friend indeed! You come forward freely, spontaneously, and do the thing at once and without parade.

Fan. So anxious, too, to conceal it. All in the true spirit of generosity.

Shat. Aye—aye—but pray say no more about it. 'Tis the duty of one young fellow to help another out of a scrape.

Bick. And to run off with his mistress too? Upon my life Shatterly, you are too bad: you are a devil of a fellow.

Shat. 'Tis all out: and this is a sample of the raillery I am to endure for the rest of my life.

Mrs. Bick. You see we are acquainted with the whole story. (*they all laugh*)

Shat. Oh! I can't bear this. Spare me! Spare me! You are my friends, my dear friends; keep my secret, I implore you.

Mrs. Bick. Not unconditionally though.

Shat. Name your conditions: my fortune, my life, what you will: but don't drive me mad.

Fan. First then, pardon Melford his past extravagance.

Shat. Granted.

Bick. Consent to his marriage with Fanny.

Shat. Granted.

Mrs. Bick. Be a good boy, and go home to your wife.

Shat. Ugh!—(*turns away*) Choose something else if you please.

Mrs. Bick. I am peremptory. Mrs. Shatterly has been here this morning; and, though I never interfere between man and wife, I must say she is an ill-used soul.

Shat. Been here!

Bick. Yes: and went hence to your house.

Shat. Zounds! Should she happen to meet—

Enter SCAMPER.

Well! what's the matter?

Scamp. Faintings, fits, and hysterics are the matter! Ten pounds and go about her business! I knew how it would be. I did all I could to prevent her coming, but she's here!

Shat. Why the little minx musn't shew her face here! Yet, gad, I should like to shew her off to Bickerton. Scamper, go, tell her.—

Scamp. Excuse me, Sir; but I'll be the bearer of no more messages to your wife.

[*Exit* SCAMPER.

Shat. My wife! What wife! What does the booby mean! Oh Lord! The truth flashes across me at once. Mrs. Shatterly in town—the last year's allowance—two hundred pounds—here's a precious blunder. (*in the greatest trouble*) What's to be done? My dear friends—Bicky, my boy—here's a sweet addition to my other troubles!

Servant Enters.

Serv. Mrs. Shatterly! [*Exit.*

Shat. I'm off.

Mrs. Bick. Stay Sir: this is to be a day of reconciliation.

Shat. Impossible, Madam; did you but know—Bicky, my dear fellow, you must help me out of this scrape. I'll explain it all to you (*takes him up the stage.*)

Enter MRS. SHATTERLY.

Mrs. Shat. Oh, Mrs. Bickerton—Fanny, my dear—You know I never utter a complaint of Mr. Shatterly's ill-usage of me—except to

yourselves and a few others of his intimate friends; but all the world shall know this.

Mrs. Bick. Sit down and compose yourself, my dear.

Mrs. Shat. Compose myself! and be pacified, I suppose! after such an outrage—to me, his wife, his lawful wedded wife!

Fanny. Hush! he's here!

Mrs. Shat. Here! I'll begone! I'll not behold him—No—I'll remain—he shall answer this in presence of you all. I must summon up the dignity of the wife. Mr.---- Shatterly----

Shat. (*to Bick, who pushes him forward*) 'Gad, my dear fellow, I cannot stand this.

Mr. Shat. So, Sir! is it come to this? Ten pounds, and go about my business!

Bick. Spare him, spare him! 'twas a mistake: he has explained it all to me.

Mrs. Shat. Let him answer for himself: he is old enough!

Shat. Then, to tell you the truth, when Scamper came to me, I thought he was speaking of—

Bick. (*hastily interrupting him*). A troublesome pensioner: Mr. Shatterly's charities are very extensive, and he has many of that kind.

Mrs. Shat. But do I deserve your neglect? Have I not always been to you an affectionate wife?

Shat. As a dove!

Mrs. Shat. Obedient?—

Shat. As a slave!

Mrs. Shat. Tender and gentle?—

Shat. As a lamb.

Bick. Once more, forgive him. He has promised to return to his allegiance, and—(*Shatterly pulls his coat*) else—

Mrs. Bick, (*to Mrs. S.*) And that you shall quit your smoky back parlour at Kensington. (*Shatterly makes a sign to her.*) Else—

Shat. But Mrs. Shatterly is in delicate health, and—

Mrs. Shat. I in delicate health! (*violently*) What do you mean by delicate health?

Shat. Why, not exactly that. (*aside.*) I am in their power. Oh! this is a bitter pill to swallow, but, since I must, I may as well do it with a good grace.—Sally, my dear,—I have been a sad wild young dog, I confess: but youth must have its day; pardon me, and I swear—(*with great difficulty he kneels*) I swear—

Mrs. Shat. Oh Shatterly, you are at your winning ways again, (*gives him her hand which, with evident reluctance, he kisses.*) All is pardoned. Rise. (*Shatterly makes an ineffectual effort to rise.*)

Enter MELFORD.

Mel. Ah, ha! this is as it should be. Let me assist you, Sir. (*helps him up.*)

Shat. Assist me! confound you, do I want assistance? Why didn't you let me remain: I hadn't said half the tender things I meant to say.

Mel. So, Sir: not only you assume my name that you may discharge debts for me, but you use it, too, to contract them! you know Captain O'Rapper?

Shat. So, that's out too! Yes, an idle blusterer, who after appointing—

Mel. Not so, Sir; I have seen him; the delay was unavoidable: the Captain is a brave fellow, and a merry one, too; for, on explaining the mistake to him, he relished the joke

highly; I have shaken hands with him on your part, and the affair has ended in a laugh.

Shat. Then let me tell you your interference was impertinent. Do you think I am unable to fight my own battles? I have a hand as steady as a finger-post, (*trembles*) and can snuff a candle at twenty yards.

Mel. Don't be angry. You are a kind uncle to me, and though I would not prevent your paying a debt for me, now and then, hang me if I'd see you in danger on my account, or allow any man living to hurt a hair of your—wig.

Shat. Harry—you are a fine fellow, and there is your reward—(*leading Fanny to him*) with five thousand pounds on your wedding day.

Mel. Well, I own I have been rather wild, thoughtless and extravagant; I have punctually fulfilled all the duties of a batchelor; that circumstance, and the choice I here make, are a guarantee that I shall make a most exemplary husband.

Bick. Let us be your models: (*takes his wife's hand*) a firm, yet gentle exercise of authority on one side—

Mrs. Bick. An entire and unresisting submission on the other—

Mrs. Shat. And do you, Mr. Shatterly, never forget that I am your lawful, wedded wife.

Shat. Lawful and wedded! Ladies, it is my opinion that a husband would seldom think of regaining his liberty, if you were not so fond of reminding him, by the cursed clanking of his chains, that he has lost it.

Mel. (*taking Fanny's hand*) Well, every state has its hopes—

Bick. (*taking Mrs. B's.*) Its pleasures—

Shat. (*taking his wife's*) And its pains.

Bick. And our only chance of happiness lies in the fulfilment of the duties of that which we have chosen.

Shat. I have promised to turn over a new leaf, so pray don't throw your morality at my head. I confess my faults; and since I return to my wife—I shall have plenty of time for sorrow and repentance.

Mel. Well, little can be said in favour even of a bachelor's life: but playing the bachelor at second hand!—However, my uncle has had the proverb in his favour: once a man and twice a child.

Bick. Twice a child perhaps, but only once a boy, depend on it.

Shat. Well, I now start afresh, and become the pattern of matrimonial propriety, as, hitherto, I have been the model of dash, frolic, and fashion. Youth must have its day: I confess—

"I sipped ev'ry flower,
"I changed ev'ry hour."

What then! I now return soberly to my wife—a devilish fine woman, and a credit to any man—(*aside*) 'Gad, I must make the best of it.—And I seriously assure you—(*pauses and comes a little forward.*)—Yet I have no great heart towards reform—What young fellow has? And if I could find any kind friend to countenance my appearing a little longer in this double state of MARRIED AND SINGLE.—(*comes forward.*) Ladies and Gentlemen, will you?—Ladies?—Ladies?

THE END.

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